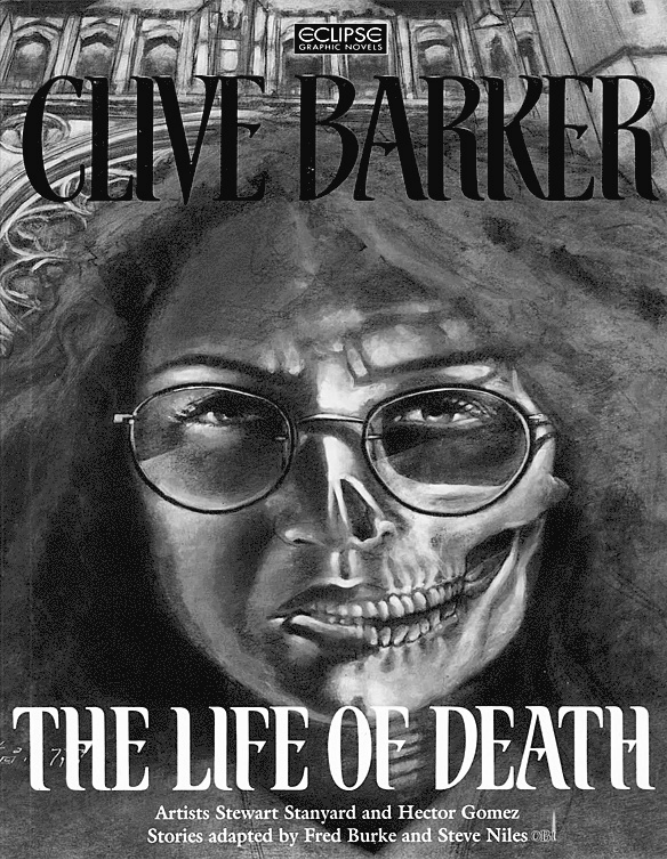


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ECLIPSE
GRAPHIC NOVELS

CLIVE BARKER

A detailed black and white illustration of a woman's face. The woman has dark, wavy hair and is wearing round-rimmed glasses. Her face is partially obscured by a realistic human skull, which is positioned over the lower half of her face, including her mouth and chin. The skull's teeth are visible, and its jawline follows the curve of her face. The background is dark and textured, with faint architectural details like arches and columns visible at the top.

THE LIFE OF DEATH

Artists Stewart Stanyard and Hector Gomez
Stories adapted by Fred Burke and Steve Niles



CLIVE BARKER was born in Liverpool in 1952. He is the author of *The Books of Blood*, *The Damnation Game*, *Weaveworld*, *Cabal*, *The Great and Secret Show*, *The Hellbound Heart*, *Imajica* and *The Thief of Always*. In addition to his work as a novelist and short story writer, he is also an accomplished illustrator and writes, directs and produces for the stage and screen. His spectacular films the *Hellraiser* trilogy, *Nightbreed* and *Candyman* bring his unique and indelible vision of modern horror to celluloid and video life. Barker uses all aspects of popular culture to substantiate his extraordinary insight into the menacing present. Millions of readers and filmgoers have been captivated by Barker's prodigious talents; now graphic novel adaptations of his stories add a further dimension to his hold on the popular imagination. Clive Barker lives in Los Angeles, where he continues his love affair with the bizarre, the perverse and the terrifying.

INTERNATIONAL ACCLAIM FOR
CLIVE BARKER:

'Barker is so good I am almost tongue-tied. What Barker does makes the rest of us look like we've been asleep for the last ten years.'

STEPHEN KING

'A powerful and fascinating writer with a brilliant imagination.'

J.G. BALLARD

'Clive Barker has been an amazing writer from his first appearance, with great gifts of invention and commitment to his own vision stamped on every page.'

PETER STRAUB

BOOKS BY CLIVE BARKER

The Books of Blood (<i>six volumes</i>)	The Hellbound Heart
The Damnation Game	Imajica
Weaveworld	The Thief of Always
Cabal	Clive Barker Illustrator
The Great and Secret Show	

GRAPHIC STORIES BY CLIVE BARKER

The Yattering and Jack	Tapping the Vein (<i>five volumes</i>)
Dread	Son of Celluloid
Revelations	

THE ARTISTS

Stewart Stanyard

is an illustrator, painter and comic book artist who also enjoys playing the violin and strumming a guitar in a room full of other people strumming guitars. He was born in 1962 in Beaver Falls, Pennsylvania, and studied illustration at the Academy of Art College in San Francisco. He has worked for such magazines as *A+*, *Mix*, *Witch*, and *The Golden Road*. His recent work includes Eclipse's *Savings and Loan Scandal* trading cards, and an *Anxiety Times* short story. He shares his life with his wife Denise and their cat Sushi, and is an avid fan of the *Twilight Zone*.

Stewart writes: I would like to offer special thanks to Denise Stanyard and Fred Sommer for modelling, Paula Sommer for the London reference, and my father Paul Stanyard for his genes.

The artwork in this book is dedicated to the loving memory of my sister Christina Lynn Stanyard.

Hector Gomez

was born in Argentina and now lives in Brazil. He has had two graphic novels published in Brazil, *Samsara* and *Amazing Muchachos*. He works as an illustrator for mainstream magazines and exhibits canvases at exhibitions. His work for Eclipse includes artwork for Clive Barker's *How Spoilers Bleed*. His covers for Malibu Comics include *Dollman*, *Rocket Ranger*, *Jungle Love* and *Paranoia*.

CLIVE BARKER

THE LIFE OF DEATH

Adapted by Fred Burke

Illustrated by Stewart Stanyard

AND

NEW MURDERS

ON THE RUE MORGUE

Adapted by Steve Niles

Illustrated by Hector Gomez



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be identified as the author of this work

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THE NEWSPAPER WAS THE FIRST EDITION OF THE FOX, AND ELAINE DEVOURED IT FROM COVER TO COVER AS SHE SAT IN THE HOSPITAL WAITING ROOM.

An animal thought to be a panther—which had terrorized the neighborhood of Egging Forest for two months—had been shot and found to be a wild dog...

Archaeologists in the Sudan had discovered bone fragments which they opined might lead to a complete reappraisal of man's origins...

...A young woman who had once danced with minor royalty had been found murdered near Clapham...

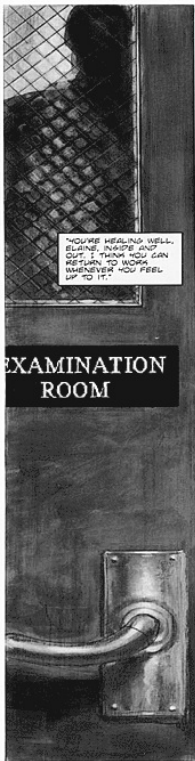
...A solo round-the-world yachtsman was missing...

...Recently excited hopes of a cure for the common cold had been dashed.

SHE READ THE GLOBAL BULLETIN AND THE TRIVIA WITH EQUAL FERVOR—ANYTHING TO KEEP HER MIND OFF THE EXAMINATION AHEAD—BUT TODAY'S NEWS SEEMED VERY LIKE YESTERDAY'S.

ONLY THE NAMES HAD BEEN CHANGED.







THE THOUGHT OF GETTING STRAIGHT ONTO THE BUS AND HEADING BACK TO HER ROOM WAS REPUGNANT AFTER SO MUCH TIME SITTING AND WAITING. SHE WOULD WALK A STOP OR TWO ALONG THE ROUTE. SHE DECIDED THE EXERCISE WOULD BE GOOD FOR HER, AND THE DECEMBER DAY, THOUGH FAR FROM WARM, WAS BRIGHT.

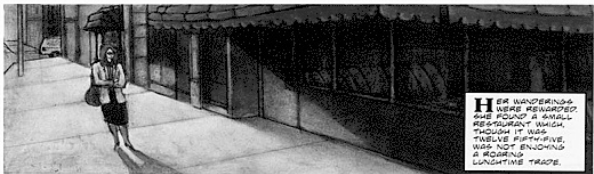


HER PLANS PROVED OVERAMBITIOUS, HOWEVER.

AFTER ONLY A FEW MINUTES OF WALKING, HER LOWER ABDOMEN BEGAN TO ACHE, AND SHE STARTED TO FEEL NAUSEATED.



SHE TURNED OFF THE MAIN ROAD TO SEEK OUT A PLACE WHERE SHE COULD REST AND DRINK SOME TEA. SHE SHOULD EAT TOO, SHE KNEW, THOUGH SHE HAD NEVER HAD MUCH APPETITE, AND HAD LESS STILL SINCE THE OPERATION.



HER WANDERINGS WERE REWARDED. SHE FOUND A SMALL RESTAURANT WHICH, THOUGH IT WAS TWELVE FIFTH-AVE, WAS NOT ENJOYING A ROBUST LUNCHTIME TRADE.

A SMALL WOMAN WITH UNASHAMEDLY ARTIFICIAL RED HAIR TOOK HER ORDER, TEA AND A MUSHROOM OMELETTE.



SHE DID HER BEST TO EAT, BUT DIDN'T GET VERY FAR.



SOMETHING WRONG WITH THE FOOD?

OH NO, IT'S JUST ME.

IT'D LIKE SOME MORE TEA THOUGH, IF I MAY?

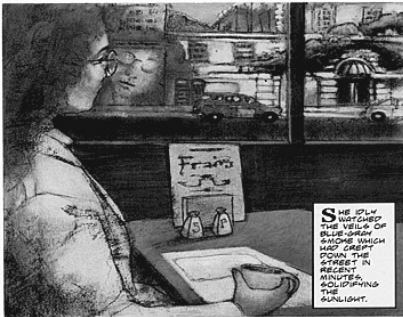
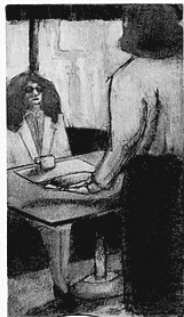


SHE FOUND EVERYWHERE LITTLE ECHOES OF HER OWN LOSS: IN THE DEATH, BY A BENIGN NOVEMBER AND THEN THE SUDDEN PROSS, OF THE BULBS IN HER WINDOWILL BOX. IN THE THOUGHT OF THE WILD DOGS SHE'D READ OF THAT MORNING, SHOT IN EPPING FOREST.

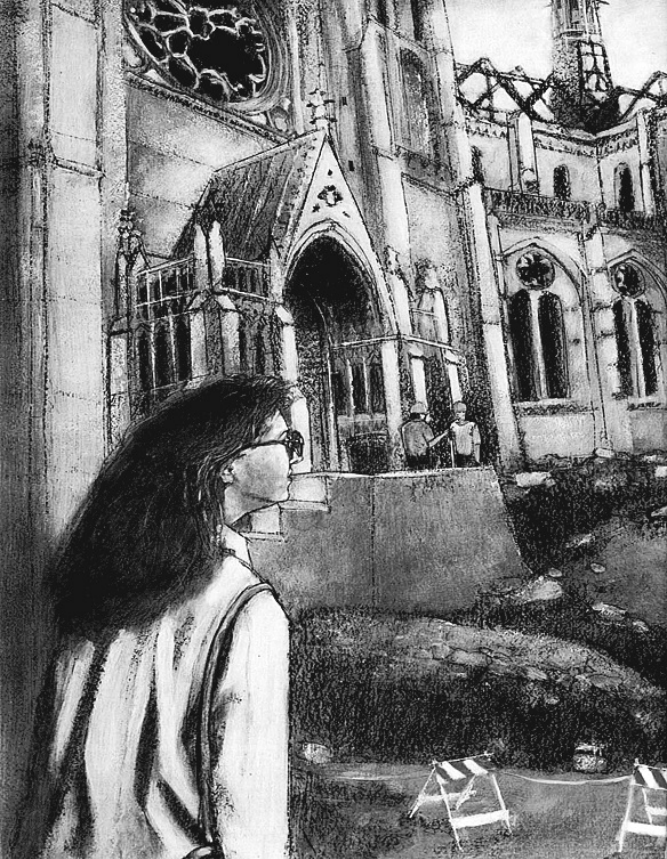


THE SIGHT OF THE MEAL CONGEALING ON THE PATTERNLESS PLATE WAS DOING NOTHING FOR HER MOOD. SHE HATED THIS UNWELCOME SENSITIVITY IN HERSELF; IT WAS ASHORE THAT A PLATE OF UNHEATED EGGS SHOULD BRING THESE THOUGHTS ON, BUT SHE COULDN'T HELP HERSELF.





THE SMOKE WAS INDEED CREEPING INTO THE RESTAURANT. ELAINE DID NOT FIND IT OFFENSIVE. IT WAS GLOBEALLY REPOLITICAN OF AUTUMN, HER FAVORITE SEASON. INTRIGUED SHE DECIDED TO WANDER ALONG AND FIND THE SOURCE OF THE SMOKE.



WE DIDN'T HAVE FAR TO WALK. THERE WAS ONE SURPRISE, HOWEVER. THE BUILDING THAT THE NEWSPAPER HAD DESCRIBED AS A COMMUNITY CENTER WAS IN FACT A CHURCH. OR WAS IT?





THE INTERIOR, STRIPPED OF ITS DECORATIVE STONESCRIPT, OF PULPIT, Pews, FONT AND THE REST, WAS SIMPLY A STONE ROOM, COMPLETELY LACKING IN ATMOSPHERE OR AUTHORITY.



SOMEbody, HOWEVER, HAD FOUND A SOURCE OF INTEREST HERE.



CW: I WON'T BE A MOMENT.

THE MAN NODDED. HIS FEATURES, DESPITE THE GARS AND GRAY HAIRS OF A MAN IN MIDDLE AGE, WERE CURIOUSLY UNLINED, AS THOUGH NEITHER SMILE NOR FROWN MUCH HAD FLED THEIR PERFECT INDIFFERENCE.

GOD, HAVN'T IFF BEEN A PLACE LIKE THIS.

DID YOU KNOW THE CHURCH AS IT USED TO BE?

IT'S ALL RIGHT--I THINK WE'RE PROBABLY BOTH TREG-PLISSING.

I CAME IN ON OCCASION, BUT IT WAS NEVER VERY POPULAR.



WHAT'S IT CALLED?

ALL SAINTS. IT WAS BUILT IN THE LATE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY, I BELIEVE. ARE YOU FOND OF CHURCHES?

NOT PARTICULARLY. IT WAS JUST THAT I SAW THE SMOKE, AND...



EVERYBODY LIKES A DEMOLITION SCENE.

YES, I SUPPOSE THAT'S TRUE.

IT'S LIKE WATCHING A FUNERAL. BETTER THEM THAN US, EN?



HE LEFT HER STANDING IN THE NAVE LIKE A FORGOTTEN BRIDE, WHILE HE WENT OUT TO QUIZ ONE OF THE WORKMEN.



SHE WANDERED DOWN TO WHERE THE ALTAR HAD BEEN, READING THE NAMES AS SHE WENT.



WHO KNEW OR CARED ABOUT THESE PEOPLE'S RESTING PLACES NOW? DEAD TWO HUNDRED YEARS AND MORE, AND GONE AWAY NOT INTO LOVING POSTERITY BUT INTO OBLIVION.

AND SUDDENLY THE UNARTICULATED HOPES FOR AN AFTERLIFE SHE HAD NURSED THROUGH HER THIRTY-FOUR YEARS SLIPPED AWAY. SHE WAS NO LONGER WEIGHED DOWN BY SOME VAGUE AMBITION FOR HEAVEN.



ONE DAY, PERHAPS THIS DAY SHE WOULD DIE, JUST AS THESE PEOPLE HAD DIED, AND IT WOULDN'T MATTER A JOE. THERE WAS NOTHING TO COME, NOTHING TO ASPIRE TO, NOTHING TO DREAM OF. SHE STOOD IN A PATCH OF SMOKE-THICKENED SUN, THINKING OF THIS, AND WAS ALMOST HAPPY.

THERE IS
INDEED A GRAVE,
BUT IT HADN'T BEEN
EMPTIED YET.



STILL
LATERFOOT.
DUST OF
BONES.

APPARENTLY
THEY'RE HAVING SOME
DIFFICULTY GETTING
INTO IT.



ALL THE
ENTRANCES HAVE
BEEN SEALED UP.
THAT'S WHY THEY'RE
DIGGING AROUND THE
FOUNDATION TO
FIND ANOTHER
WAY IN.

ARE
GRAVES
NORMALLY
SEALED
UP?

NOT AS
THOROUGHLY AS
THIS ONE.

MADE
THEIR WAY
NO MORE
ROOM.



MAHSE.



WILL THEY GIVE YOU ONE OF THE STONES?

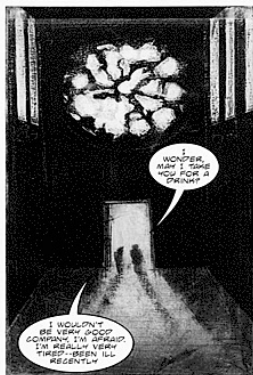
IT'S NOT UP TO THEM TO SAY. THESE ARE JUST COUNCIL LOCKERS.

APPARENTLY THEY HAVE A FIRM OF PROFESSIONAL EXCAVATORS TO COME IN AND SHIFT THE BODIES TO NEW BURIAL SITES. IT ALL HAS TO BE DONE WITH THE DECORUM.



THEY TOLD ME TO COME BACK IN A DAY OR TWO TIME, AND ASK THE MOVING MEN.

SHE LAUGHED AT THE THOUGHT OF THE DEAD MOVING HOUSE, PACKING UP THEIR GOODS AND CHATTER. KUNAGISHI WAS PLEASED TO HAVE MADE A JOKE, EVEN IF IT HAD BEEN UNINTENTIONAL.



I WONDER, MAN, I TAKE YOU FOR A DRINK?

I WOULDN'T BE VERY GOOD COMPANY, I'M AFRAID. I'M REALLY VERY TIRED--BEN ILL RECENTLY.



WE COULD PERHAPS MEET LATER...

HE WAS PLEASANT ENOUGH, IN HIS UNRESENTFUL WAY. SHE LIKED HIS GREEN SCOWTIE--SURELY A JOKE AT THE EXPENSE OF HIS OWN DRIVENESS. SHE LIKED HIS SERIOUSNESS TOO. BUT SHE COULDN'T FACE THE IDEA OF DRINKING WITH HIM, AT LEAST NOT TONIGHT.

I--I'M SCREWED...



BEFORE THEY PARTED THEY EXCHANGED TELEPHONE NUMBERS. SHE SEEMED CURIOUSLY EXCITED BY THE THOUGHT OF THEIR MEETING AGAIN. IT MADE HER FEEL, DESPITE ALL THAT HAD BEEN TAKEN FROM HER, THAT SHE STILL HAD HER SEX.

SHE RETURNED TO THE FLAT TO FIND BOTH A PARCEL FROM MITCH AND A HUNGRY CAT ON THE DOORSTEP. SHE FED THE DEMANDING ANIMAL, THEN MADE HERSELF SOME COFFEE AND OPENED THE PARCEL.

IN IT, COCOONED IN SEVERAL LAYERS OF TISSUE PAPER, SHE FOUND A SILK SCARF, CHOSEN WITH MITCH'S LINGERING EYE FOR HER TASTE.

*It's your color.
I love you,
Mitch.*

SHE WANTED TO PICK UP THE TELEPHONE ON THE SPOT AND TALK TO HIM, BUT SOMEHOW THE THOUGHT OF HEARING HIS VOICE SEEMED DANGEROUS, TOO CLOSE TO THE WART, PERHAPS. HE WOULD ASK HER HOW SHE FELT, AND SHE WOULD REPLY THAT SHE WAS WELL, AND HE WOULD INSIST SHE WAS, BUT REALLY, AND SHE WOULD SAY I'M EMPTY. THEY TOOK OUT HALF MY INNARDS, DAMN YOU, AND I'LL NEVER HAVE YOUR CHILDREN OR ANYBODY ELSE'S. SO THAT'S THE END OF THAT, ISN'T IT?



DAMN HIM FOR TRYING TO MAKE THINGS BETTER NOW, WHEN AT THE TIME SHE'D MOST NEEDED HIM ALL HE'D TALKED OF WAS FATHERHOOD--AND HOW HER TUMORS WOULD DENY IT HIM.



IT WAS A CLEAR EVENING--THE SKY'S GOLD SKIN STRETCHED TO BREAKING POINT. SHE DID NOT WANT TO PULL THE CURTAINS IN THE FRONT ROOM, EVEN THOUGH FINGERBOY WOULD STARE IN, BECAUSE THE DEEPENING BLUE WAS TOO FINE TO MISS.



ONLY WHEN THE LAST CHANGES HAD BEEN WROUGHT DID SHE CLOSE OFF THE SKILL.

SHE HAD NO APPETITE, BUT SHE MADE HERSELF SOME FOOD. NEVERTHELESS, AND SAT DOWN TO WATCH TELEVISION AS SHE ATE. THE FOOD UNFINISHED, SHE LAY DOWN HER TRAY AND DOZED, THE PROGRAMS FILTERING THROUGH TO HER INTERMITTENTLY...

...SOME WITLESS COMEDIAN WHOSE MEREST COUGH SENT HIS AUDIENCE INTO PSYCHICISM, A NATURAL HISTORY PROGRAM ON LIFE IN THE SERENGETI, THE NEWS.

SHE HAD READ ALL THAT SHE NEEDED TO KNOW THAT MORNING; THE HEADLINES HADN'T CHANGED.

ONE ITEM, HOWEVER, DID FIGURE HER CURIOUSLY: AN INTERVIEW WITH THE SOLO YACHTSMAN, MICHAEL MATHURAN, WHO HAD BEEN PICKED UP THAT DAY AFTER TWO WEEKS ADrift IN THE PACIFIC.

THE INTERVIEW WAS BEING BEAMED FROM AUSTRALIA, AND THE CONTACT WAS BAD; THE PICTURE LITTLE MATTERED; THE ACCOUNT HE GAVE OF HIS FAILED VOYAGE WAS RIVETING IN SOUND ALONE, AND IN PARTICULAR AN EVENT THAT SEEMED TO DISTRESS HIM AFRESH EVEN AS HE TOLD IT.

HE HAD BEEN BECALMED, AND AS HIS VESSEL LACKED A MOTOR HAD BEEN OBLIGED TO WAIT FOR WIND. IT HAD NOT COME. A WEEK HAD GONE BY WITH HIS HARDLY MOVING A KILOMETER FROM THE SAME SPOT OF LITTLE-SEA OCEAN; NO BIRD OR PASSING SHIP BROKE THE MONOTONY.

WITH EVERY HOUR THAT PASSED, HIS CLAUSTROPHOBIA GREW, AND ON THE EIGHTH DAY IT REACHED PANIC PROPORTIONS. SO HE LET HIMSELF OVER THE SIDE OF THE YACHT AND SWAM AWAY FROM THE VESSEL, A LIFELINE TIED ABOUT HIS MIDDLE, IN ORDER TO ESCAPE THE SAME FEW HARDS OF DECK.

BUT ONCE AWAY FROM THE YACHT, AND TREADING THE STILL, WARM WATER, HE HAD NO DESIRE TO GO BACK. WHY NOT UNTIL THE KNOT, HE'D THOUGHT TO HIMSELF, AND FLOAT AWAY...?



"WHAT MADE YOU
CHANGE YOUR MIND?"

"... I LOOKED BACK AT THE
"RIGHT, AND I SAW SOME-
BODY ON THE DECK."

"IN THE MIDDLE OF NOWHERE?
SOMEONE ON BOARD?"

"THAT'S RIGHT. SOMEBODY WAS
THERE. I SAW A FIGURE QUITE
CLEARLY MOVING AROUND."

"DID YOU RECOGNIZE THIS
STOWAWAY WHO WAS IT?"

"I DON'T KNOW. DEATH,
I SUPPOSE."



"BUT OF COURSE YOU
RETURNED TO THE
BOAT, EVENT-
UALLY."

"OF
COURSE."

"AND THERE
WAS NO SIGN OF
ANYBODY?"



"I'D
SURVIVED,
WOULDN'T
IT?"

"I'M NOT
SURE I GET YOUR
POINT..."



I DIDN'T DROWN. I COULD HAVE DIED THEN, IF I'D WANTED TO SLIPPED OFF THE ROPE AND DROWNED.

BUT YOU DIDN'T, AND THE NEXT DAY...

THE NEXT DAY THE WIND PICKED UP.

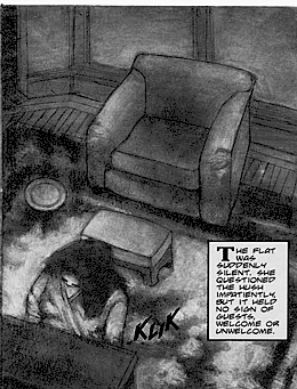
IT'S AN EXTRAORDINARY STORY. YOU MUST BE LOOKING FORWARD TO SEEING YOUR FAMILY AGAIN FOR CHRISTMAS.

E LANE DIDN'T HEAR THE FINE, EXCHANGE OF PLEASANTRIES...



...HER IMAGINATION WAS TIED BY A FINE ROPE TO THE ROOM SHE WAS SITTING IN; HER FINGERS TOYED WITH THE KNOT.

IF DEATH COULD FIND A BOAT IN THE WASTES OF THE PACIFIC, HOW MUCH EASIER IT MUST BE TO FIND HER. TO SIT WITH HER, PERHAPS, AS SHE SLEPT, TO WATCH HER AS SHE WENT ABOUT HER MOURNING.



THE FLAT WAS SUDDENLY SILENT. SHE QUESTIONED THE MUSH IMPATIENTLY, BUT IT HELD NO SIGN OF GUESTS, WELCOME OR UNWELCOME.



AS SHE LISTENED, SHE COULD TASTE SALT WATER.

OCEAN, NO DOUBT.

SHE HAD BEEN OFFERED SEVERAL REFUSES IN WHICH TO CONVINCE WHEN SHE HAD FIRST COME OUT OF THE HOSPITAL. HER FATHER HAD INVITED HER UP TO ABERDEEN: HER SISTER RACHEL HAD MADE SEVERAL APPEALS FOR HER TO SPEND A FEW WEEKS IN BUCKINGHAMSHIRE: THERE HAD EVEN BEEN A PITIFUL TELEPHONE CALL FROM MITCH, IN WHICH HE HAD TALKED OF THEIR HOLDING TOGETHER.



INSTEAD SHE HAD RETURNED TO WORK AS SOON AS SHE FELT ABLE, HOPING THAT ALTHOUGH SHE HAD NOT TAKEN ON ALL HER FORMER RESPONSIBILITIES, THE FAMILIAR ROUTINES WOULD HELP HER TO REESTABLISH A NORMAL LIFE.



SHE HAD REJECTED THEM ALL, TELLING THEM THAT SHE WANTED TO REESTABLISH THE RHYTHM OF HER PREVIOUS LIFE AS SOON AS POSSIBLE TO RETURN TO HER JOB, TO HER WORKING COLLEAGUES AND FRIENDS.



IN FACT, HER REASONS HAD GONE DEEPER THAN THAT. SHE HAD FEARED THEIR SYMPATHIES, FEARED THAT SHE WOULD BE HELD TOO CLOSE IN THEIR AFFECTION...

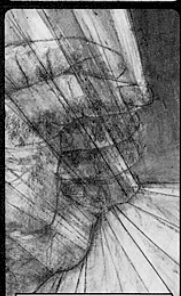


...AND QUICKLY CAME TO RELY UPON THEM. HER STRAIN OF INDEPENDENCE, WHICH HAD FIRST BROUGHT HER TO THIS UNFRIENDLY CITY, WAS IN STUDIED DEFIANCE OF HER SMOTHERING APPETITE FOR SECURITY. IF SHE GAVE IN TO THOSE LOVING APPEALS SHE KNEW SHE WOULD TAKE ROOT IN DOMESTIC SOIL AND NOT LOOK UP AND OUT AGAIN FOR ANOTHER YEAR, IN WHICH TIME, WHAT ADVENTURES MIGHT HAVE PHASSED HER BUT

BUT THE SLEIGHT OF HAND WAS NOT ENTIRELY SUCCESSFUL. EVERY FEW DAYS SOMETHING WOULD OVERHEAR SOME REMIND, OR CATCH A LOOK THAT SHE WAS NOT INTENDED TO SEE...



--THAT MADE HER REALIZE SHE WAS BEING TREATED WITH A REHEARSED CAUTION, THAT HER COLLEAGUES VIEWED HER AS BEING FUNDAMENTALLY CHANGED BY HER ILLNESS.



IT HAD MADE HER ANGRY. SHE'D WANTED TO SPIT HER SUSPICIONS IN THEIR FACES, TELL THEM THAT SHE AND HER UTERUS WERE NOT SYNONYMOUS, AND THAT THE REMOVAL OF ONE DID NOT IMPLY THE ECLIPSE OF THE OTHER.

BUT TODAY, RETURNING TO THE OFFICE, SHE WAS NOT SO CERTAIN THEY WEREN'T CORRECT. SHE FELT AS THOUGH SHE HADN'T SLEPT IN WEEKS, THOUGH IN FACT SHE WAS SLEEPING LONG AND DEEPLY EVERY NIGHT. HER EYESIGHT WAS BLURRED, AND THERE WAS A CURIOUS REMOTENESS ABOUT HER EXPERIENCES THAT DAY THAT SHE ASSOCIATED WITH EXTREME FATIGUE, AS IF SHE WERE DRIFTING FURTHER AND FURTHER FROM THE WORK ON HER DESK, FROM HER CONVERSATIONS, FROM HER VERY THOUGHTS.

TWICE THAT MORNING SHE CAUGHT HERSELF SPEAKING AND THEN WONDERED WHO IT WAS WHO WAS CONVERSING OF THESE WORDS. IT CERTAINLY WASN'T HER; SHE WAS TOO BUSY LISTENING.

SHE HAD BEEN CALLED INTO HER SUPERVISOR'S OFFICE AND SPED TO SIT DOWN...

ARE YOU ALL RIGHT, ELAINE?

YES, I'M FINE.

THERE'S BEEN SOME CONCERN...

ABOUT WHAT?

YOUR BEHAVIOR. PLEASE DON'T THINK I'M PRYING, ELAINE. IT'S JUST THAT IF YOU NEED SOME FURTHER TIME TO RECOVERATE--

THERE'S NOTHING WRONG WITH ME.

BUT YOUR WEeping--

WHAT?

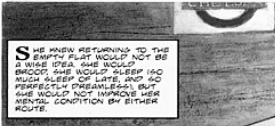
THE WAY YOU'VE BEEN CRYING TODAY. IT CONCERNS US.

WHAT I DON'T GET.

BUT YOU'VE BEEN CRYING ALL DAY. YOU'RE CRYING NOW.







SHE KNEW RETURNING TO THE EMPTY FLAT WOULD NOT BE A WISE IDEA. SHE WOULD SLEEP (SO MUCH SLEEP OF LATE, AND SO PERFECTLY DREAMLESS), BUT SHE WOULD NOT IMPROVE HER MENTAL CONDITION BY EITHER ROUTE.




A NEARBY CHURCH BELL, TOLLING THE CLEAR AFTERNOON, REMINDED HER OF THE SMOKE AND THE SMOKE AND MISTY MORNINGS THERE. SHE DECIDED WAS A FIT PLACE FOR HER TO WALK. SHE COULD ENJOY THE SUNLIGHT, AND THINK, MAYBE SHE WOULD MEET HER ADMIRER AGAIN.

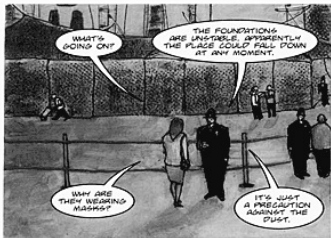


SHE FOUND HER WAY BACK TO ALL SAINTS EASILY ENOUGH, BUT THERE WAS DISAPPOINTMENT AWAITING HER. THE WORKERS AND THEIR HAMMERS HAD BEEN EXILED FROM THE SHADOWS OF ALL SAINTS AND NOW A VERY DIFFERENT SELECTION OF PEOPLE--MUSEUMS--OCCUPIED THE ZONE BEYOND THE RIBBON. SOME IN FURROWED CONVERSATION, OTHERS STANDING ON THE MUDDY GROUND AND STARING UP QUIZZICALLY AT THE PERISLT CHURCH.

OCCASIONALLY SOMEBODY WOULD EMERGE FROM BEHIND THIS VEIL AND CONSULT WITH OTHERS ON THE SITE.



ALL WHO DID SO, SHE NOTED, WERE WEARING GLOVES. ONE OR TWO WERE ALSO MASKED. IT WAS AS THOUGH THEY WERE PERFORMING SOME AD HOC GARDEN IN THE SHELTER OF THE SCREEN, A TUMOR, PERHAPS IN THE BOWELS OF ALL SAINTS.







HE WAS UNDOUBTEDLY ONE OF THE MOST OF GREAT INDIVIDUALS SHE'D EVER ENCOUNTERED, BUT HE HAD COME INTO HER LIFE—WITH HIS EAGERNESS TO TALK OF CRAFTS AND THE DEAD AND THE BEAUTY OF HER TEETH—AT JUST THE RIGHT MOMENT.



ON THE JOURNEY BACK, AND LATER THAT EVENING, SHE THOUGHT PARTICULARLY OF THE JOKE HE HAD MADE ABOUT THE DEAD TWIDDLING THEIR THUMB BONES, AND THAT THOUGHT LED NECESSARILY TO THE MYSTERIES THAT LAY OUT OF SIGHT IN THE CRAFT.



SHE EARLY WANTED TO GLIP THROUGH THAT GORDON OF KISSON AND SEE THE BUILDING CHAMBER WITH HER OWN EYES. IT WAS A DREAMS SHE WOULD NEVER PREVIOUSLY HAVE ADMITTED TO HERSELF.



BUT HAVANASH HAD LEGITIMIZED HER APPETITE WITH HIS FLAMING ENTHUSIASM FOR THINGS FUNERAL.

NOW, WITH THE TABOO SHE'D, SHE WANTED TO GO BACK TO ALL SAINTS AND LOOK DEATH IN ITS FACE; THEN NEXT TIME SHE SAW HAVANASH SHE WOULD HAVE SOME STORIES TO TELL OF HER OWN.





SHE WATCHED
IN SILENCE AS
THE SHIVERING
POLICEMEN TOOK
SHELTER, TURNING
ON A RADIO IN THE
WORKMEN'S HUT...

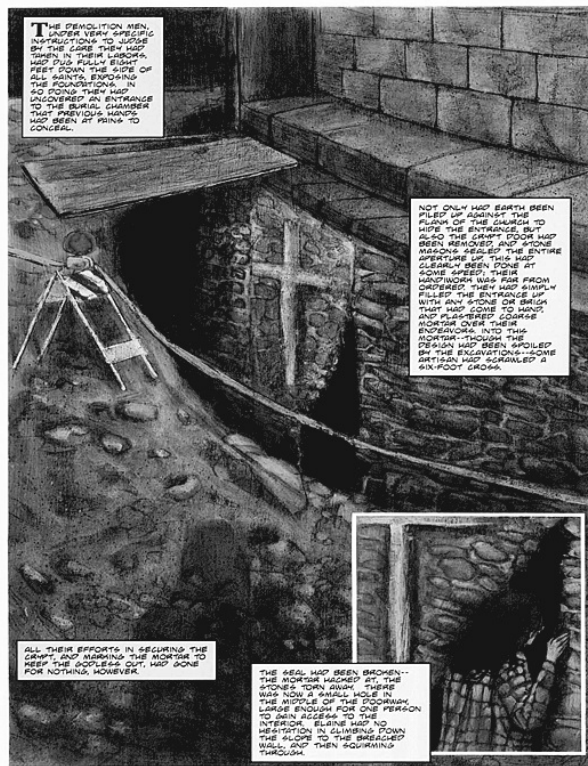


...ITS NOISE (MUSIC FOR
LOVERS FROM DUSK TO DAWN,
THE DISTANT VOICE PURRED)
WOULD COVER HER CRACKLING
ADVANCE ACROSS THE
FROZEN BARTH.



BEHIND HER, THE MUSIC
FOR LOVERS MURMURED
ON. NO ONE EMERGED
FROM THE HUT TO SUMMON
HER FROM HER TRESPASSING.
NO ALBAN BELL'S RANG.





THE DEMOLITION MEN, UNDER VERY SPECIFIC INSTRUCTIONS TO JUDGE BY THE CARE THEY HAD TAKEN IN THEIR LABORS, HAD DUG FULLY EIGHT FEET DOWN THE SIDE OF ALL SAINTS, EXPOSING THE FOUNDATIONS. IN SO DOING, THEY HAD UNCOVERED AN ENTRANCE TO THE BURIAL CHAMBER THAT PREVIOUS HANDS HAD BEEN AT PAINS TO CONCEAL.

NOT ONLY HAD BARTH BEEN PILED UP AGAINST THE PLUMB OF THE CHURCH TO HIDE THE ENTRANCE, BUT ALSO THE GRIFT DOOR HAD BEEN REMOVED AND STONE MASONRY SEALED THE ENTIRE APERTURE UP. THIS HAD CLEARLY BEEN DONE AT SOME SPEED; THEIR HANDIWORK WAS FAR FROM ORDERED. THEY HAD SIMPLY FILLED THE ENTRANCE UP WITH ANY STONE OR BRICK THAT HAD COME TO HAND, AND PLASTERED COARSE MORTAR OVER THEIR ENDEAVORS. INTO THIS MORTAR--THOUGH THE DESIGN HAD BEEN SPOILED BY THE EXCAVATIONS--SOME ARTISAN HAD SCRRAWLED A SIX-FOOT CROSS.

ALL THEIR EFFORTS IN SECURING THE GRIFT, AND MARKING THE MORTAR TO KEEP THE GODLESS OUT, HAD GONE FOR NOTHING, HOWEVER.

THE SEAL HAD BEEN BROKEN--THE MORTAR WASHED AWAY, THE STONES TORN AWAY. THERE WAS NOW A SMALL HOLE IN THE MIDDLE OF THE DOORWAY, LARGE ENOUGH FOR ONE PERSON TO GAIN ACCESS TO THE INTERIOR. ELAINE HAD NO HESITATION IN CLIMBING DOWN THE SLOPE TO THE BREACHED WALL, AND THEN SQUIRMING THROUGH.

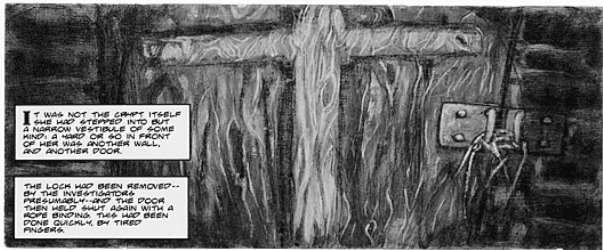


SHE HAD PREDICTED THE DARKNESS SHE MET ON THE OTHER SIDE, AND HAD BROUGHT WITH HER A CIGARETTE LIGHTER MITCH HAD GIVEN HER THREE YEARS AGO.



IT WAS NOT THE CRAFT ITSELF SHE HAD STEPPED INTO BUT A NARROW VESTIBULE OF SOME KIND; A HARD CHAIR IN FRONT OF HER WAS ANOTHER WALL, AND ANOTHER DOOR.

THE LOCK HAD BEEN REMOVED-- BY THE INVESTIGATORS, PRESUMABLY--AND THE DOOR THEN HELD SHUT AGAIN WITH A ROPE BINDING. THIS HAD BEEN DONE QUICKLY, BY TIED FINGERS.



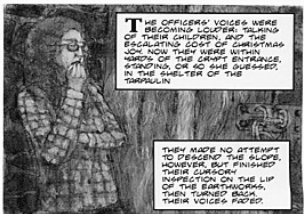
SHE DID NOT FIND THE ROPE DIFFICULT TO UNTIE, THOUGH IT REQUIRED BOTH HANDS, AND SO HAD TO BE EFFECTED IN THE DARK.

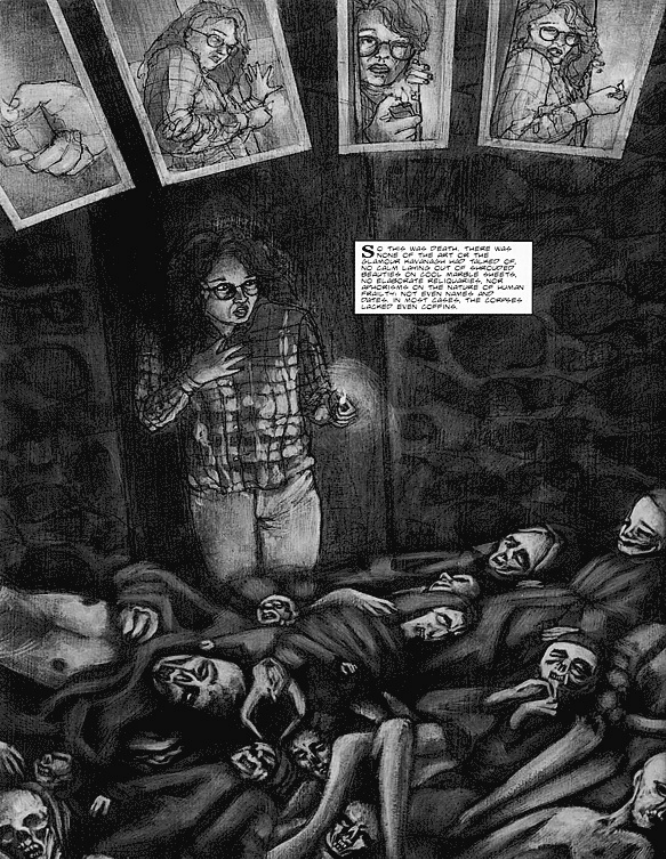
AS SHE WORKED THE KNOT FREE, SHE HEARD VOICES. THE POLICEMEN-- DAMN THEM--HAD LEFT THE REGULATION OF THEIR HUT AND COME OUT INTO THE BITTER NIGHT TO DO THEIR ROUNDS.



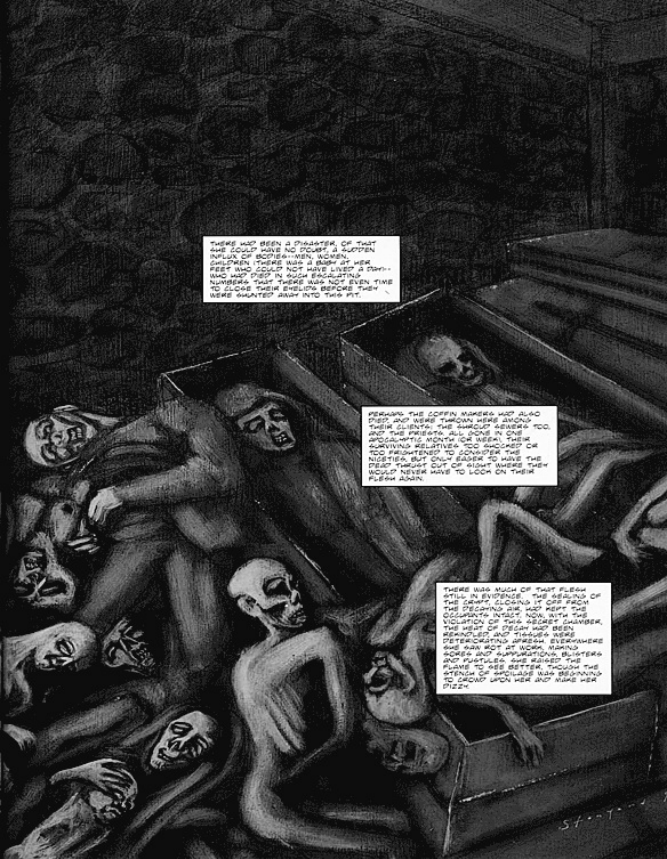
THE OFFICERS' VOICES WERE BECOMING LOUDER: TALKING OF THEIR CHILDREN, AND THE ESCALATING LOSS OF CHRISTMAS JOY. NOW THEY WERE WITHIN HEARDS OF THE CRAFT ENTRANCE, STANDING, OR SO SHE GUESSED, IN THE SHELTER OF THE TARPULIN.

THEY MADE NO ATTEMPT TO DESCEND THE SLOPE, HOWEVER, BUT FINISHED THEIR CASUALTY INSPECTION ON THE LIP OF THE BATHWORKS, THEN TURNED BACK. THEIR VOICES FADED.





SO THIS WAS DEATH. THERE WAS NONE OF THE ART OF THE FLAMBOYANT MURDERER WHO TALKED OF NO GUILT LIVING OUT OF UNSECURED SEATBELTS ON COOL MARBLE SEATS, NO ELABORATE RELIQUARIES, NO APHORISMS ON THE NATURE OF HUMAN FLESH, NOT EVEN NAMES AND DATES IN MOST CASES. THE SCENES LACKED EVEN COFFINS.



THERE HAD BEEN A CHAOS OF THAT
ONE COULD HAVE NO DOUBT A SUDDEN
INFUX OF BODIES--MEN, WOMEN,
CHILDREN THERE WAS A BABY AT HER
FEET WHO COULD NOT HAVE LIVED A DAY--
WHO HAD DIED IN SUCH BRAGGARTING
NUMBERS THAT THERE WAS NOT EVEN TIME
TO CLOSE THEIR EYES--BEFORE THEY
WERE HAUNTED AWAY INTO TWO PIT.

PERHAPS THE COFFIN MAKERS HAD ALSO
DIED AND WERE THROWN HERE AMONG
THEIR CLIENTS. THE WHOLE SCENE WAS
AND THE PRIESTS ALL DONE IN ONE
PROFOUNDLY MOUTH OF DEATH. THE
SURVIVING RELATIVES TOO GUILTY OR
TOO FRIGHTENED TO CONSIDER THE
NUSTIA, BUT ONLY LATER TO HAVE THE
DEAD THREAT OUT OF SIGHT WHERE THEY
WOULD NEVER HAVE TO LOOK ON THEIR
FLESH AGAIN.

THERE WAS MUCH OF THAT FLESH
STILL IN EVIDENCE. THE BLOOD OF
THE DEPARTING WAS LEFT FROM
THE OCCUPANTS INSTANTLY WITH THE
VIOLATION OF THIS SECRET CHAMBER.
THE HEAT OF DEATH HAD BEEN
RECKONED AND THOUGH WERE
PETERGASTING AROUND EVERYWHERE
AND WAS NOT AT WORK. HINDS
SCORCH AND SUPPLICATION, BLISTERS
AND PUNCTURES WAS REARED THE
FLAME TO SEE BETTER, THOUGH THE
ATTENDANCE OF SPILLAGE WAS BEGINNING
TO GROW UPON HER AND MAKE HER
DIZZIER.

ST-Y...



SHE COULD NOT HELP BUT ASK, THOUGH HER FASCINATION CHEATED THEM OF PRIVACY. THERE WAS SO MUCH TO SEE AND REMEMBER. SHE COULD NEVER BE THE SAME, COULD SHE, HAVING VIEWED THESE SCENES?



THE FLESH OF THE CORPSE WAS GREASY TO THE TOUCH AND LEFT HER FINGERS STAINED, BUT SHE WAS NOT DISTRESSED.



HAD SHE MISGORGED, FLAINE WONDERED, OR HAD SOME DISEASE DEVoured HER THERE?



SUCH A PLACE TO LIE, SHE THOUGHT, WITH YOUR BLOOD STILL SHAWING YOU. SHE WOULD TELL MAYNARD, WHEN NEXT SHE SAW HIM, HOW WRONG HE WAS, BEEN WITH HIS SENTIMENTAL TOLES OF CALM BENEATH THE GOD.



SHE HAD SEEN ENOUGH, MORE THAN ENOUGH.



WHEN SHE CLIMBED THE SLOPE INTO THE CLEEN AIR, THE POLICEMEN WERE NOWHERE IN SIGHT, AND SHE SLIPPED AWAY UNSEEN, LIKE A SHADOW'S SHADOW.

THERE WAS NOTHING FOR HER TO FEEL, ONCE SHE HAD MASTERED HER INITIAL DISGUST AND THAT THING OF PITY SHE'D FELT SEEING THE CHILDREN AND THE WOMAN WITH THE CHESTNUT HAIR, AND EVEN THOSE RESPONSES--EVEN THE PITY AND THE REPUGNANCE--WERE QUITE MANAGEABLE.

SHE HAD FELT BOTH MORE ACUTELY SEEING A DOG RUN DOWN BY A CAR THAN SHE HAD STANDING IN THE CRYPT OF ALL SAINTS, DESPITE THE HORROR DISPLAYING ON EVERY SIDE.

WHEN SHE LAY HER HEAD DOWN TO SLEEP THAT NIGHT, AND REALIZED THAT SHE WAS NEITHER TRAVELING NOR NAUSTRATED, SHE FELT STRONG.

WHAT WAS THERE TO FEAR IN ALL THE WORLD IF THE SPECTACLE OF MORTALITY SHE HAD JUST WITNESSED COULD BE BORNE SO RESULT SHE SLEPT DEEPLY, AND Woke REFRESHED.



SHE COULD SENSE HER COLLEAGUES DOUBTING THAT THIS BOUT OF SUNSHINE ACTUALLY MEANT A SUMMER.



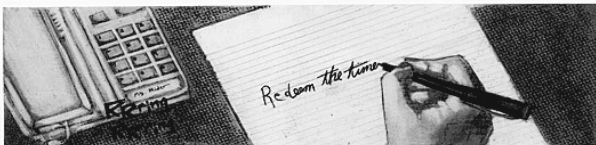
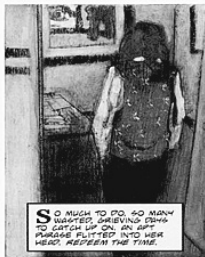
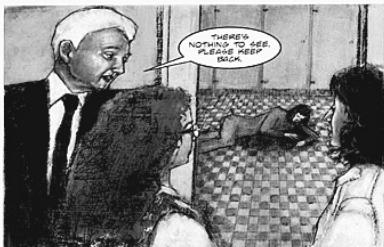
BUT WHEN THE SUNSHINE WAS SUSTAINED THROUGHOUT THE DAY AND THROUGH THE DAY FOLLOWING, THEY BEGAN TO RESPOND MORE READILY. BY THURSDAY IT WAS AS THOUGH THE YEARS OF EARLIER IN THE WEEK HAD NEVER BEEN SHED.

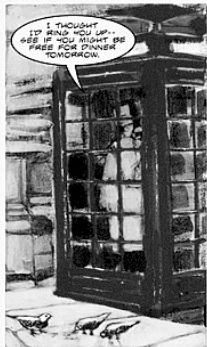


"YOU'RE LOOKING SO WELL, SUANE!"

IT WAS TRUE: HER EYES SHONE. SHINE. SHINE. SHE WAS A PICTURE OF VITALITY.









THE FOLLOWING DAY BROUGHT UNHAPPY NEWS. BERNICE HAD DIED IN THE EARLY HOURS OF FRIDAY MORNING, WITHOUT EVER REGAINING CONSCIOUSNESS. THE CAUSE OF DEATH WAS AS YET UNVERIFIED, BUT THE OFFICE GOSSIPING CONCLUDED THAT SHE HAD NEVER BEEN A STRONG WOMAN--WINNING THE FIRST AMONG THE SECRETARIES TO CATCH A COLD AND THE LAST TO SHAKE IT OFF.

THERE WAS ALSO SOME TALK, THOUGH TRADED LESS LOUDLY, ABOUT HER PERSONAL BEHAVIOR. SHE HAD BEEN GENEROUS WITH HER FAVORS; IT APPEARED, AND NAUGHTY IN HER CHOICE OF PARTNERS, WITH VENEREAL DISEASES REACHING EPIDEMIC PROPORTIONS, WAS THAT NOT THE LIKELIEST EXPLANATION FOR THE DEATH?



THE NEWS, THOUGH IT KEPT THE REMAINDEERS IN BUSINESS, WAS NOT GOOD FOR GENERAL MORALE. TWO GIRLS WENT SICK THAT MORNING, AND IT SEEMED AT LUNCHTIME THAT ELAINE WAS THE ONLY MEMBER OF STAFF WITH AN APPETITE.

SHE COMPENSATED FOR THE LACK IN HER COLLEAGUES, HOWEVER. SHE HAD A FIERCE HUNGER IN HER. HER BODY ALMOST SEEMED TO ASK FOR SUSTENANCE. IT WAS A GOOD FEELING AFTER SO MANY MONTHS OF LACHTITUDE.



WHEN SHE LOOKED AROUND AT THE WORN FACES AT THE TABLE SHE FELT UTTERLY ALONE FROM THEM--

--FROM THEIR TITLISH TRIVIAL OPINIONS, FROM THE WAY THEIR TALK CIRCLED ON THE SLOPPINESS OF BERNICE'S DEATH AS THOUGH THEY HAD NOT GIVEN THE SUBJECT A MOMENT'S THOUGHT IN YEARS, AND WERE ANGRY THAT THEIR NEGLIGENCE HAD NOT RENDERED IT EXTINCT.



ELAINE KNEW BETTER. SHE HAD COME CLOSE TO DEATH SO OFTEN IN THE RECENT PAST--

--DURING THE MONTHS LEADING UP TO HER HYSTERECTOMY, WHEN THE TUMORS HAD SUDDENLY DOUBLED IN SIZE AS THOUGH SENSING THAT THEY WERE PLOTTED AGAINST; ON THE OPERATING TABLE, WHEN TWICE THE SURGEONS THOUGHT THEY'D LOST HER, AND MOST RECENTLY, IN THE CRAFT, FACE-TO-FACE WITH THOSE GAWPING CARCASSES.

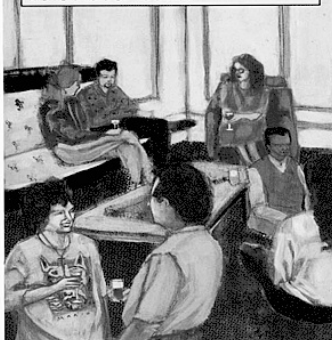


DEATH WAS EVERYWHERE. THAT THEY SHOULD BE SO STARTLED BY ITS ENTRANCES INTO THEIR CHARMLESS CIRCLE STRUCK HER AS ALMOST COMICAL.



SHE ATE LUSTILY, AND LET THEM TALK IN WHISPERS.

THEY GATHERED FOR HER PARTY AT REUBEN'S HOUSE-- ELAINE, HERMIONE, DAN AND NEILLYN. JOAN AND SONJA. IT WAS A GOOD NIGHT, A CHANCE TO PICK UP ON HOW MUTUAL FRIENDS WERE FARING, HOW STATUSES AND AMBITIONS WERE ON THE CHANGE.



MOMBURY
WHAT ABOUT
HIM?

GAM
AND I WERE
JUST DRINKING NOW
STRAWING IT
ALL WAS...



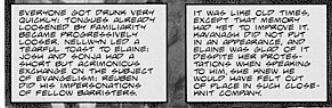
I SAW HIM
ON THE NEWS.

SAD STORY,
ISN'T IT? THE WAY
IT HAPPENED.

WAS
GAM?

HIM
SAYING THAT--
ABOUT DEATH BEING
ON THE BOAT WITH
HIM--AND THEN
DING.

DING?
WHEN WAS
THAT?



EVERYONE GOT DRUNK VERY QUICKLY; TONGUES ALREADY LOOSENED BY FAMILIARITY BECAME PROGRESSIVELY LOOGER. NEILLYN LED A TEARFUL TOAST TO ELAINE; JOAN AND SONJA HAD A SHORT BUT ACERBIC EXCHANGE ON THE SUBJECT OF EVANGELISM; REUBEN DID HIS IMPERSONATIONS OF FELLOW BARRISTERS.

IT WAS LIKE OLD TIMES, EXCEPT THAT MEMORY HAD MET TO IMPROVE IT. KAVANAGH DID NOT PUT IN AN APPEARANCE, AND ELAINE WAS GLAD OF IT. DESPITE HER PROTESTATIONS, WHEN SPEAKING TO HIM, SHE KNEW HE WOULD HAVE FELT OUT OF PLACE IN SUCH CLOSE-KNIT COMPANY.



SO
GAM?

IT WAS
IN ALL THE
PAPERS.



HE WAS
KILLED. THEY
WERE TAKING HIM TO
THE AIRPORT TO FLY HIM
HOME, AND THERE WAS AN
ACCIDENT. HE WAS KILLED
JUST LIKE THAT.
OUT LIKE A
LIGHT.



HERMIONE GLANCED
AT ELAINE, AND A
FROWN CREEPT ACROSS
HER FACE.



THE LOOK BIFFLED
ELAINE UNTIL--

--WITH THAT SAME SHOCK OF
RECOGNITION SHE'D FELT IN
CHINESE OFFICE, DISCOVERING
HER TEARS--SHE REALIZED
THAT SHE WAS SMILING.





SHE WOKED UP LATE ON SATURDAY MORNING, WITHOUT THE ANTICIPATED HANGOVER. THERE WAS A LETTER FROM MITCH. SHE DIDN'T OPEN IT, BUT LEFT IT FOR AN IDLE MOMENT LATER IN THE DAY.



THE FIRST SNOW OF WINTER WAS IN THE WIND, THOUGH IT WAS TOO WET TO MAKE ANY SERIOUS IMPRESSION ON THE STREETS. THE CHILL WAS BITING ENOUGH, HOWEVER, TO JUDGE BY THE SCOWLS ON THE FACES OF PASSERSBY. SHE FELT COLDLY INNATE FROM IT, HOWEVER, AS THOUGH SHE HAD A FIRE STOKED IN HER BELLY.



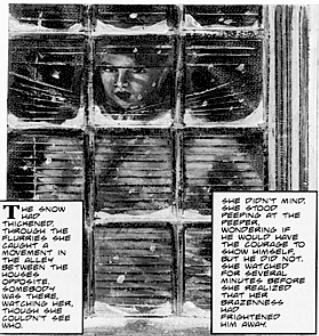
SINCE THE REMOVAL OF THE DRESSINGS SHE HAD STUDIOUSLY AVOIDED ANY CLOSE SCRUTINY OF HER BODY, BUT TODAY HER QUALMS AND HER VANITY SEEMED TO HAVE DISAPPEARED.



SHE WAS PLEASED WITH WHAT SHE SAW. THE SCAR ITSELF STILL LOOKED AND FELT TENDER, BUT HER EYES READ ITS LIVENESS AS A SIGN OF HER CUNT'S ANXIETY, AS THOUGH ANY DAY NOW HER SEX WOULD GROW FROM ANUS TO NAVEL (AND BEYOND, PERHAPS), OPENING HER UP, MAKING HER TERRIBLE.



IT WAS PARADOXICAL, SURELY, THAT IT WAS ONLY NOW, WHEN THE SURGEONS HAD EMPTIED HER OUT, THAT SHE SHOULD FEEL SO RIPE, SO RESPLENDENT. SHE STOOD FOR FULLY HALF AN HOUR IN FRONT OF THE MIRROR ADMIRING HERSELF, HER THOUGHTS DRIFTING OFF.



THE SNOW HAD THICKENED THROUGH THE FLURRIES. SHE CAUGHT A MOVEMENT IN THE ALLEY BETWEEN THE HOUSES OPPOSITE. SOMEBODY WAS THERE, WATCHING HER, THOUGH SHE COULDN'T SEE WHO.

SHE DIDN'T MIND, SHE STOOD PEEPING AT THE PEETER, WONDERING IF HE WOULD HAVE THE COURAGE TO SHOW HIMSELF, BUT HE DID NOT. SHE WATCHED FOR SEVERAL MINUTES BEFORE SHE REALIZED THAT HER BRAZENNESS HAD FRIGHTENED HIM AWAY.

IT WAS TIME SHE FOUND HERSELF SOMETHING TO EAT. SHE HAD THE FAMILIAR FIERCE HUNGER UPON HER.



THE FRIDGE WAS PRACTICALLY EMPTY. SHE WOULD HAVE TO GO OUT AND STOCK UP FOR THE WEEKEND.



SUPERMARKETS WERE CIRCUSES, ESPECIALLY ON A SATURDAY, BUT HER MOOD WAS FAR TOO BUDGENT TO BE DEPRESSED BY HAVING TO MAKE HER WAY THROUGH THE CROWDS.



TODAY SHE EVEN FOUND SOME PLEASURE IN THESE SCENES OF CONSPICUOUS CONSUMPTION: IN THE SHOPPING CARTS AND BAGGERS HEISTED HIGH WITH FOODSTUFFS, AND THE CHILDREN GREEDY EYES AS THEY APPROACHED THE CONFECTIONERY AND TREATS. IF DENIED IT, AND THE WIVES WEIGHING UP THE MERITS OF A LEG OF MUTTON WHILE THEIR HUSBANDS WATCHED THE GIRLS ON THE STAFF WITH EYES NO LESS CALCULATING.

SHE PURCHASED TWICE AS MUCH FOOD FOR THE WEEKEND AS SHE WOULD NORMALLY HAVE DONE IN A FULL WEEK, HER APPETITE DRIVEN TO DISTRACTION BY THE SMELLS FROM THE DELICATESSEN AND FRESH-MEAT COUNTERS.



BY THE TIME SHE REACHED THE HOUSE SHE WAS ALMOST SHAKING WITH THE ANTICIPATION OF SUSTENANCE.



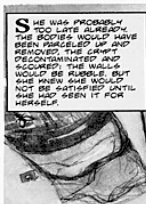


AS SHE SET TO DEVOURING THE OMELETTE, ELAINS THOUGHT OF THE PALTRY OMELETTE SHE'D BEEN UNABLE TO FINISH THAT DAY AFTER THE VISIT TO THE HOSPITAL.

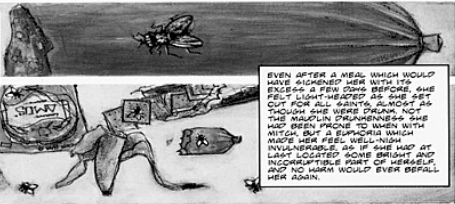


ONE THOUGHT LED TO ANOTHER--

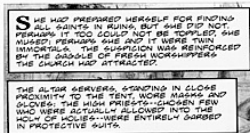
--FROM OMELETTE TO ANCHOR TO THE SQUARE TO HAVANASH TO HER MOST RECENT VISIT TO THE CHURCH, AND THINKING OF THE PLACE SHE WAS SUDDENLY SEIZED BY AN ENTHUSIASM TO SEE IT ONE FINAL TIME BEFORE IT WAS ENTIRELY LEVELED.



SHE WAS PROBABLY TOO LATE ALREADY. THE BODIES WOULD HAVE BEEN PHASELED UP AND REMOVED, THE GRUNT DECONTAMINATED AND SQUARED. THE WALLS WOULD BE RUMBLE, BUT SHE KNEW SHE WOULD NOT BE SATISFIED UNTIL SHE HAD SEEN IT FOR HERSELF.

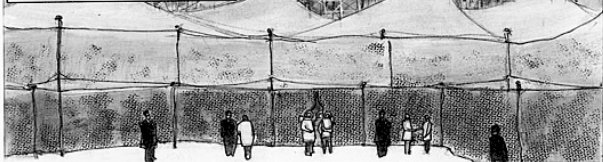


EVEN AFTER A MEAL WHICH WOULD HAVE SICKENED HER WITH ITS EXCESS A FEW DAYS BEFORE, SHE FELT LIGHT-HEADED AS SHE SET OUT FOR ALL SAINTS, ALMOST AS THOUGH SHE WERE DRUNK, NOT THE MAUDLIN DRUNKENNESS SHE HAD BEEN PRONE TO WHEN WITH MITCH, BUT A EUPHORIA WHICH MADE HER FEEL WELL-NIGH INVULNERABLE, AS IF SHE HAD AT LAST LOCATED SOME BRIGHT AND INCORRUPTIBLE PART OF HERSELF, AND NO HARM WOULD EVER BEFALL HER AGAIN.



SHE HAD PREPARED HERSELF FOR FINDING ALL SAINTS IN RUIN, BUT SHE DID NOT. PERHAPS IT TOO COULD NOT BE TOPPLED, SHE MUSED, PERHAPS SHE AND IT WERE TWIN IMMORTALS. THE SUSPICION WAS REINFORCED BY THE GIGGLE OF FRESH WORSHIPPERS THE CHURCH HAD ATTRACTED.

THE ALTAR SERVERS, STANDING IN CLOSE PROXIMITY TO THE TENT, WORE MASKS AND GLOVES. THE HIGH PRIESTS--CHICHEN FEW WHO WERE ACTUALLY ALLOWED INTO THE HOLY OF HOLIES--WERE ENTIRELY GARBED IN PROTECTIVE SUITS.





SHE WATCHED FROM THE CORDON: THE SIGNS AND GENUFLECTIONS BETWEEN THE DEVOTEES, THE SLIDDING DOWN OF THE SUITED MEN AS THEY EMERGED FROM BEHIND THE VEIL, THE FINE SPRAY OF FUMIGANTS WHICH FILLED THE AIR LIKE BITTER INCENSE.



WHY THE SUITS?



IN CASE IT'S CONTAGIOUS.

AFTER ALL THESE YEARS?



THEY DON'T KNOW WHAT THEY'VE GOT IN THERE.

DISEASES DON'T LAST, DO THEY?



IT'S A PLAQUE PIT. THEY'RE JUST BEING CAUTIOUS.

ELAINÉ'S TONGUE ITCHED TO SPEAK... SHE COULD HAVE THEM THEIR INVESTIGATIONS WITH A FEW WORDS.



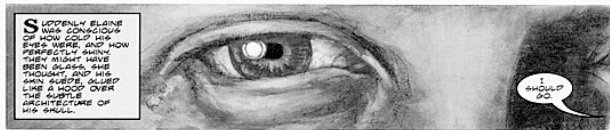
AFTER ALL, SHE WAS LIVING PROOF THAT WHATEVER PESTILENCE HAD DESTROYED THE FAMILIES IN THE CRAFT, IT WAS NO LONGER VIRULENT.

SHE HAD BREATHED THAT AIR. SHE HAD TOUCHED THAT MOLDY FLESH, AND SHE FELT HEALTHIER NOW THAN SHE HAD IN YEARS.



BUT THEY WOULD NOT THANK HER FOR HER REVELATIONS, WOULD THEY? THEY WERE TOO ENGROSSSED IN THEIR RITUALS, PERHAPS EVEN EXCITED BY THE DISCOVERY OF SUCH HORRORS, THEIR TURMOIL FUELED AND FIRED BY THE POSSIBILITY THAT THIS DEATH WAS STILL LIVING, SHE WOULD NOT BE SO UNSPORTING AS TO SOUR THEIR ENTHUSIASM WITH A CONFESSION OF HER OWN RARE GOOD HEALTH.





EVEN IF SHE HAD WANTED
A TO RISE, HAVING HER
GOOD WISHES ALONG TO
REUBEN AND SONJA, SHE
COULD NOT HAVE DONE SO.
HERMIONE DID NOT ANSWER
THE TELEPHONE, NOR DID
ANY OF THE OTHERS. THE
CLOSEST SHE CAME WAS
TO LEAVE A MESSAGE WITH
REUBEN'S ANSWERING
SERVICE.



THE LIGHT-
HEAVENESS
SHE'D FELT
EARLIER IN THE
DAY DEVELOPED
INTO A STRANGE
DREAMINESS AS
THE AFTERNOON
INCHED TOWARD
EVENING. SHE
ATE AGAIN, BUT
THE FEELT DID
NOTHING TO
KEEP THE FUGUE
FROM
DEEPENING.



SHE FELT QUITE WELL: THAT
SENSE OF INVULNERABILITY THAT
HAD COME UPON HER WAS STILL
INTACT. BUT TIME AND AGAIN AS THE
DAY WORE ON SHE FOUND HERSELF
STANDING ON THE THRESHOLD OF A
ROOM NOT KNOWING WHY SHE HAD
COME THERE, OR WATCHING THE
LIGHT PINWHEEL IN THE STREET
OUTSIDE WITHOUT BEING QUITE
CERTAIN IF SHE WAS THE VIEWER OR
THE THING VIEWED.



SHE WAS HAPPY WITH HER
SCOMPANY THOUGH, AS
THE FLIES WERE HAPPY.
THEY KEPT BUZZING
ATTENTANCE EVEN THOUGH
THE DARK FELL.



SHE WENT TO THE DOOR
OF HER FLAT, BUT COULDN'T
MUSTER THE INQUISITIVENESS
TO OPEN IT, STEP OUT INTO THE
HALLWAY, AND ADMIT GALLERIE.



IT WOULD BE HERMIONE AGAIN,
MOST PROBABLY, AND SHE
DIDN'T HAVE ANY APPEAL FOR
GLOOMY TALK. DIDN'T WANT
ANYBODY'S COMPANY, IN FACT,
BUT THAT OF THE FLIES.



THE GALLERIE INSISTED
ON THE BELL. THE MORE
THEY INSISTED THE MORE
DETERMINED SHE BECAME
NOT TO REPLY. IT WASN'T
HERMIONE--THE VOICES SHE
HEARD BELONGED TO NO
ONE SHE RECOGNIZED.





NO SOONER HAD ELAINE DECIDED TO TAKE SOME AIR, HOWEVER, THAN THE VIGILANT PAULDICE WAS AT THE TOP OF THE STAIRS.



MISS RIDER
WAIT A MOMENT.
I HAVE A MESSAGE
FOR YOU.



THERE
WERE POLICEMEN
THEY WERE
LOOKING FOR YOU.

OH,
DID THEY
SEE WHAT
THEY WANTED?



TO TALK
TO YOU URGENTLY.
TWO OF YOUR
FRIENDS...

WHAT
ABOUT THEM?

THEY
DIED THIS
AFTERNOON.
THEY HAVE
SOME KIND
OF DISEASE.



THEY
LEFT THAT
NUMBER
FOR YOU TO
CALL.

YOU'RE
TO CONTACT
THEM AS
SOON AS
POSSIBLE.



FOR SOME REASON SHE WASN'T THINKING OF REUBEN OR SONJA-AND, IT SEEMED, SHE WOULD NOT SEE AGAIN-OUT OF THE SAILOR, MAYBURY, WHO'D BEEN DEATH AND SACRIFICED IT ONLY TO HAVE IT FOLLOW HIM LIKE A LOUSY DOG, WAITING ITS MOMENT TO LEAP AND LICK HIS FACE.



WAS THE TOUCH THAT WOULD SO INNOCENTLY AT THE END OF HER ARMS NOW LET THAT WAS THAT WHAT THE DETECTIVES HAD COME TO TELL HER, THAT HER FRIENDS WERE DEAD BY AAT GOOD OFFICES?



SUDDENLY SHE KNEW, KNEW IN HER MARROW, THAT HER PURSUERS WERE RIGHT IN THEIR SUSPICIONS, AND THAT ALL THESE DREAMY DAYS SHE HAD BEEN NURTURING A FATAL CHILD, HENCE HER WUNGER, HENCE THE SLOW OF FULFILLMENT SHE FELT.

SHE SAT IN THE SEMIDARKNESS, TRYING TO WORK OUT PRECISELY THE PLAGUE'S LOCATION.



WAS IT IN HER FINGERTIPS, IN HER BELLY, IN HER CHEST NONE, AND YET ALL OF THESE.

HER FIRST ASSUMPTION HAD BEEN WRONG. IT WASN'T A CHILD AT ALL. SHE DIDN'T GARRY IT IN SOME PARTICULAR CELL. IT WAS EVERYWHERE, SHE AND IT WERE SYNONYMOUS. THAT BEING SO, THERE COULD BE NO GLICING OUT OF THE OFFENDING PART, AS THEY HAD GLICED OUT HER TUMORS AND ALL THAT HAD BEEN DEVOURD BY THEM.

NOT THAT SHE WOULD ESCAPE THEIR ATTENTIONS FOR THAT FACT. THEY HAD COME LOOKING FOR HER, WONT THEY, TO TAKE HER BACK INTO THE CUSTODY OF STERILE ROOMS, TO DEPRIVE HER OF HER OPTIONS AND DIGNITY TO NAME HER FIT ONLY FOR THEIR LOVELESS INVESTIGATIONS?



THE THOUGHT REVOLTED HER: SHE WOULD RATHER DIE AS THE CHESTNUT-WAIVED WOMAN IN THE CRAFT HAD DIED, SPRAWLED IN AGONIES, THAN SUBMIT TO THEM AGAIN.

IT WAS TOO LATE FOR SOLUTIONS ANYWAY. THE MOVING MEN HAD OPENED THE DOOR AND FOUND DEATH WAITING ON THE OTHER SIDE. EAGER FOR DRAUGHT, SHE WAS ITS AGENT, AND IT--IN ITS WIDDOM--HAD GRANTED HER IMMUNITY. HAD GIVEN HER STRENGTH AND A DREAMY RAPTURE, HAD TAKEN HER FEAR AWAY. SHE, IN RETURN, HAD SPREAD ITS WORD, AND THERE WAS NO LONGER THOSE LABORS: NOT NOW.



ALL THE DOZENS, MAYBE HUNDREDS, OF PEOPLE WHOM SHE'D CONTAMINATED IN THE LAST FEW DAYS WOULD HAVE GONE BACK TO THEIR FAMILIES AND FRIENDS, TO THEIR WORKPLACES AND THEIR PLACES OF RECREATION, AND SPREAD THE WORD YET FURTHER.



THEY WOULD HAVE PASSED ITS FAUL PROMISE TO THEIR CHILDREN AS THEY TUCKED THEM INTO BED...



...AND TO THEIR MATES IN THE ACT OF LOVE...

...PRIESTS HAD NO DOUBT GIVEN IT WITH COMMUNION...



...SHOPKEEPERS WITH CHANGE OF A FIVE-POUND NOTE.



L-DONG

THEY HAD COME BACK FOR HER AND, AS BEFORE, THEY WERE RINGING THE OTHER BELLS IN THE HOUSE. SHE COULD HEAR PRUDHOE COMING DOWNSTAIRS. THIS TIME HE WOULD KNOW SHE WAS IN. HE WOULD TELL THEM SO. THEY WOULD HAMMER AT THE DOOR, AND WHEN SHE REFUSED TO ANSWER--



AS PRUDHOE OPENED THE FRONT DOOR SHE UNLOCKED THE BACK. AS SHE SLIPPED INTO THE HEDS SHE HEARD VOICES AT THE FLAT DOOR, AND THEN THEIR KAPPING AND THEIR DEMANDS. SHE WAS ALREADY OUT OF HEARING RANGE BY THE TIME THEY HAD BEATEN DOWN THE DOOR.



SHE WANTED MOST OF ALL TO GO BACK TO ALL SAINTS, BUT SHE KNEW THAT SUCH A TACTIC WOULD ONLY INVITE ARREST. THEY WOULD EXPECT HER TO FOLLOW THAT ROUTE, COUNTING UPON HER ADHERENCE TO THE FIRST CAUSE. BUT SHE WANTED TO SEE DEATH'S FACE AGAIN, NOW MORE THAN EVER. TO SPEAK WITH IT, TO DEBATE ITS STRATEGIES, THEIR STRATEGIES. TO ASK WHY IT HAD CHOSEN HER.



WHAT WERE THEY DOING? PEEKING THROUGH HER UNDERWEAR AND HER LOVE LETTERS, MOST PROBABLY. EXAMINING THE SHEETS ON HER BED FOR STRAY HAIRS, AND THE MIRROR FOR TRACES OF HER REFLECTION.



BUT EVEN IF THEY TURNED THE FLAT UPSIDE DOWN, IF THEY EXAMINED EVERY PRINT AND PRONOUN, THEY WOULDN'T FIND THE CLUES THEY SOUGHT. LET THEM SEARCH.



THE LOVER HAD ESCAPED. ONLY HER TEARDROPS REMAINED AND FLIES AT THE LIGHT BULB TO SING HER PRAISES.



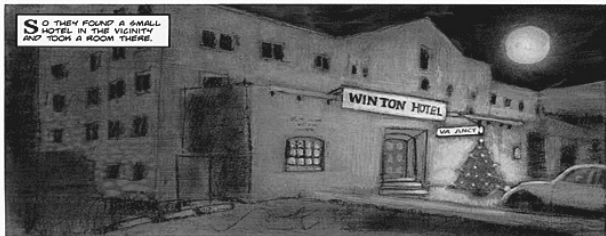
IT WAS ONLY NOW, IN THE RELATIVE HUSH, THAT SHE REALIZED SHE WAS NOT ALONE. FOOTSTEPS FOLLOWED HER, KEEPING A CAUTIOUS DISTANCE, BUT NEVER STRAYING FAR.

HAD THE TRACKERS FOLLOWED HER WERE THEY HUNTING HER IN EVEN NOW, PREPARING TO SNATCH HER INTO THEIR CLOSED ORBIT? IF SO, FLIGHT WOULD ONLY DELAY THE INEVITABLE. BETTER TO CONFRONT THEM NOW, AND DRIVE THEM TO SOME WITHIN RANGE OF HER POLLUTION.



HER INITIAL SHOCK WAS ALMOST IMMEDIATELY SUPERSEDED BY A SUDDEN COMPREHENSION OF WHY HE HAD PURSUED HER. NOW, HER WHIRLING THOUGHTS DEMANDED: HAD SHE NOT RECOGNIZED HIM SOONER, NOT REALIZED AT THAT FIRST MEETING, WHEN HE'D TALKED OF THE DEAD AND THEIR GLAMOUR, THAT HE SPOKE AS THEIR MAREK?





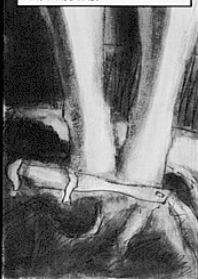
HER LOVER DIDN'T TAKE HIS EYES OFF HER FOR A SINGLE MOMENT. AS IF EVEN NOW HE EXPECTED HER TO TURN TAIL AND RUN AT THE MEREST FLOW IN HIS BEHAVIOR.



HIS TREATMENT OF HER LEFT LITTLE CAUSE FOR COMPLAINT. HIS KISSES WERE INSISTENT BUT NOT OVERPOWERING; HIS UNDRRESSING OF HER-- EXCEPT FOR THE FUMBLING (A NICE HUMAN TOUCH, SHE THOUGHT)--WAS A MODEL OF FENGSHI AND SWEET SOLEMNITY.



SHE WAS SURPRISED THAT HE HAD NOT KNOWN ABOUT HER SCAR, ONLY BECAUSE SHE HAD COME TO BELIEVE THIS INTIMACY HAD BEGUN ON THE OPERATING TABLE, WHEN TWICE SHE HAD GONE INTO HIS ARMS, AND TWICE BEEN DENIED THEM BY THE SURGEON'S BULLYING. BUT PERHAPS, BEING NO SENTIMENTALIST, HE HAD FORGOTTEN THAT FIRST MEETING.



IT'S BEAUTIFUL.

I ALMOST DIED UNDER THE ANESTHETIC.

THAT WOULD HAVE BEEN A WASTE.



WHAT DID THEY TELL YOU?

SHE HAD NOT BEEN TOUCHED IN MONTHS, EXCEPT BY DIAPHRAGMATIC HANDS; HIS DELICACY WOKE SHIVERS IN HER. SHE WAS SO ENGRESSSED IN PLEASURE THAT SHE FAILED TO REPLY TO HIS QUESTION.



WHAT DID THEY TELL YOU?

THEY LEFT A NUMBER FOR ME TO RING, SO THAT I COULD BE HELPED...

BUT YOU DIDN'T WANT HELP?

NO, WHY SHOULD I?





SHE WOLF SAW HIS SMILE, THOUGH HER EYES WANTED TO FLICKER CLOSED ENTIRELY. HIS APPEARANCE FAILED TO STIR ANY PASSION IN HER; INDEED THERE WAS MUCH ABOUT HIS PHYSIQUE (THAT ABSURD BOW TIE, FOR ONE) WHICH SHE THOUGHT RIDICULOUS.



WITH HER EYES CLOSED, HOWEVER, SHE COULD FORGET SUCH PETTY DETAILS; SHE COULD STRIP THE HOOD OFF AND IMAGINE HIM PURE. WHEN SHE THOUGHT OF HIM THAT WAY, HER MIND PROCKETTED.



SOMEBODY SHOUTED IN THE STREET OUTSIDE. HIS HEAD JERKED IN THE DIRECTION OF THE WINDOW; HIS BODY TENSED. SHE WAS SURPRISED AT HIS SUDDEN CONCERN.

IT'S ALL RIGHT.



BE QUIET.

I THOUGHT I HEARD...

WHAT?



...I THOUGHT I HEARD THEM CALLING MY NAME.

WHO WOULD DO THAT? NOBODY KNOWS WE'RE HERE.



THEY CAME CLOSE, BUT THEY NEVER FOUND ME.

CLOSE?

COMING TO YOU.



SO VERY CLOSE, BUT I'M SHIRT AND INVINCIBLE.



AND ALWAYS NEAR.





SHALL I
SHOW HOW
CLEAN I AM? HOW
EASILY I STOP
THE
DRUMMING?

SHE HEARD THE DRUMMER QUICKEN
ITS RHYTHM IN HER EARS.



IT'S
QUICK, AND
CLEAN.

THERE WAS
AN ERROR
HERE, SHE KNEW,
A TERRIBLE MIS-
UNDERSTANDING
WHICH SHE
COULDN'T QUITE
FATHOM. SHE
STRUGGLED TO
MAKE SOME
SENSE OF IT.



GLEE...
DAH

TOO LATE
FOR EXCUSES.
YOU CAME TO ME.
REMEMBER? YOU
WANT THE DRUMMER
STOPPED. WHY
ELSE DID YOU
COME?



DON'T
YOU SEE
THAT THEY
CAME TO WARN
YOU ABOUT
ME?

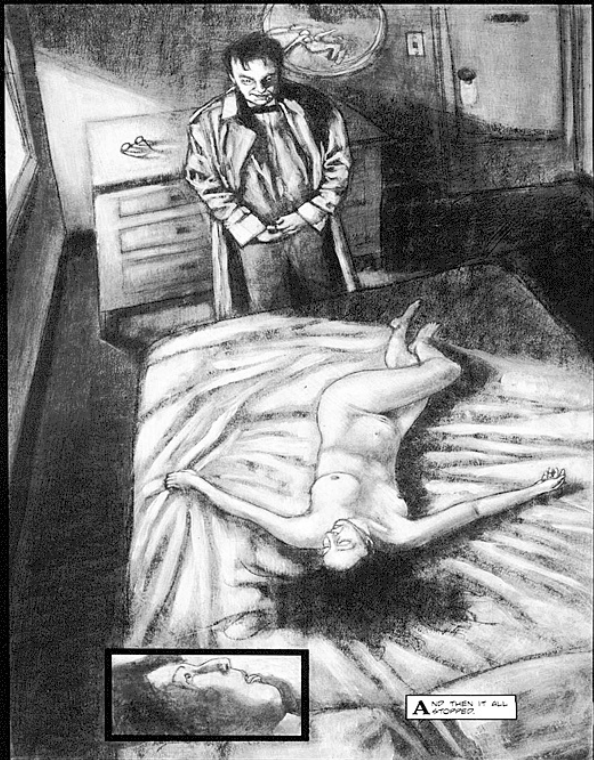
THEN
CAME TO
SEDUCE YOU
AWAY FROM ME
BY TELLING YOU
I STILLED
BLOOD.

NO...

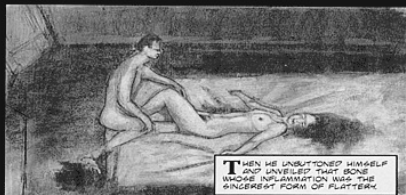
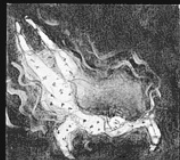


THE DRUMMER WAS DEAFENINGLY
LOUD NOW; THOUGH MARYANNA'S
MOUTH STILL OPENED AND CLOSED,
SHE COULD NO LONGER HEAR WHAT
HE WAS TELLING HER. IT MATTERED
LITTLE. SHE REALIZED NOW THAT HE
WAS NOT DEATH, NOT THE CLEAN-
BONED GUARDIAN SHE'D WAITED FOR.

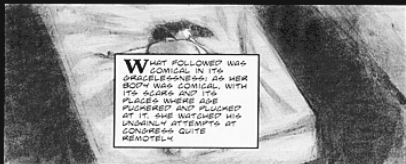
IN HER EAGERNESS, SHE HAD GIVEN
HERSELF INTO THE HANDS OF A
COMMON KILLER, A STREET-CORNER
CAN. SHE WANTED TO SPIT CONTEMPT
AT HIM, BUT HER CONSCIOUSNESS
WAS SLIPPING, THE ROOM, THE LIGHTS,
THE FACE ALL THROBBING TO THE
DRUMMER'S BEAT.



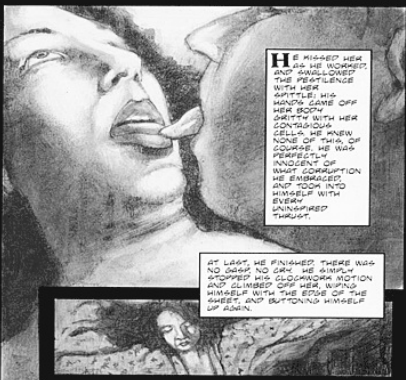
AND THEN IT ALL
STOPPED.



THEN HE UNBUTTONED HIMSELF AND UNVEILED THAT SORE WHOSE INFLAMMATION WAS THE GINGEREST FORM OF FLATTERY.



WHAT FOLLOWED WAS COMICAL IN ITS GRACELESSNESS: AS HER BODY WAS COMICAL, WITH ITS SCARS AND ITS PLACES WHERE AGE PUCKERED AND PLUCKED AT IT, SHE WATCHED HIS UNBIDEN ATTEMPTS AT COMEDY QUITE REMOTELY.



HE KISSED HER AND SWALLOWED THE PESTILENCE WITH HER WHITTLE; HIS HANDS CAME OFF HER BODY GRITTY WITH HER CONTAGIOUS CELLS. HE KNEW NONE OF THIS, OF COURSE. HE WAS PERFECTLY INNOCENT OF WHAT CORRUPTION HE EMBRACED, AND TOOK INTO HIMSELF WITH EVERY UNINSPIRED THRUST.

AT LAST, HE FINISHED: THERE WAS NO GASP, NO GRAY. HE SIMPLY STOPPED HIS CLOCKWORK MOTION AND CLIMBED OFF HER, LEAVING HIMSELF WITH THE EDGE OF THE SHEET, AND BUTTONING HIMSELF UP AGAIN.





SHE HAD JOURNEYS TO MAKE, REASONING TO LOOK FORWARD TO, BUT SHE DID NOT WANT TO GO, AT LEAST NOT YET.



HER SIGHT, OR WHATEVER SENSE THIS CONDITION ORIENTED HER, SAW CLEARLY HOW MERVIN'S FEATURES WERE PRINTED OVER A GROUNDWORK OF MUSCLE, AND NOW, BENEATH THAT INTRICATE SCHEME, THE BONES GLOWED.



AH, THE BONES! HE WAS NOT DEAD, OF COURSE, AND YET HE WAS. HE HAD THE FACE, HADN'T HE? AND ONE DAY, GIVEN DECA'S BLESSING, HE'D SHOW IT, SUCH A PITY THAT A SCRAPING OF FLESH CAME BETWEEN IT AND THE NAKED EYE.



COME AWAY

COME AWAY

A MOMENT, ONLY A MOMENT MORE

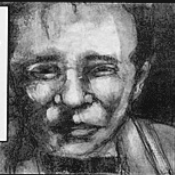


WAS IT DOWN THAT WASHED THE SHIN OR THE ILLUMINATION? PERHAPS SHE HAD WATCHED HIM FROM THE CORNER OF THE ROOM LONGER THAN SHE'D THOUGHT--

--HOURS PASSING AS MOMENTS IN THE STATE SHE HAD SO RECENTLY ACHIEVED.



ONLY AT THE LAST WAS SHE REWARDED FOR HER VIGIL, AS A LOOK SHE RECOGNIZED CROSSED KAVANASH'S FACE. MURDER THE MAN WAS MURDER. HE WOULD NOT DIE OF THE PLAGUE, ANY MORE THAN SHE HAD. ITS PRESENCE SHONE IN HIM--GAVE A FRESH LUSTER TO HIS SHIN, AND A NEW INSISTENCE TO HIS BELLY.



HA HA HA

H E HAD COME TO HER A MINOR MURDERER, AND WAS GOING FROM HER AS DEATH WAIT LARGE. SHE LAUGHED, SEEING THE SELF-FULFILLING PROPHECY SHE HAD UNWITTINGLY ENGINEERED.

FOR AN INSTANT HIS FACE SLOWED, AS IF HE MIGHT HAVE HEARD HER. BUT NO! IT WAS THE DRUMMER HE WAS LISTENING FOR, BEATING LOUDER THAN EVER IN HIS EAR AND DEMANDING, AS HE WENT, A NEW AND DEADLY VIGIL IN HIS EVERY STEP.



THE END

NEW MURDERS IN THE RUE MORGUE

WINTER, LEWIS DECIDED, WAS NO SEASON FOR OLD MEN. THE SNOW THAT LAY FIVE INCHES THICK ON THE STREETS OF PARIS FROZE HIM TO THE MARROW. WHAT HAD BEEN A JOY TO HIM AS A CHILD WAS NOW A CURSE. HE HATED IT WITH ALL HIS HEART; HATED THE SNOWBALLING CHILDREN (SQUEALS, HOWLS, TEARS); HATED, TOO, THE YOUNG LOVERS, EAGER TO BE CAUGHT IN A FLURRY TOGETHER (SQUEALS, KISSES, TEARS). IT WAS UNCOMFORTABLE AND TIRESOME, AND HE WISHED HE WAS IN FORT LAUDERDALE, WHERE THE SUN WOULD BE SHINING.

HE'D COME AT A SUMMONS FROM THE PAST, AND HE WOULD HAVE COME AS SWIFTLY, AND AS WILLINGLY, IF PARIS HAD BEEN BURNING.

BUT CATHERINE'S TELEGRAM, THOUGH NOT EXPLICIT, HAD BEEN URGENT, AND THE TIES OF FRIENDSHIP BETWEEN THEM HAD BEEN UNBROKEN FOR THE BEST PART OF FIFTY YEARS. HE WAS HERE FOR HER, AND FOR HER BROTHER PHILLIPE.



BESIDES, IT WAS HIS MOTHER'S CITY. SHE'D BEEN BORN ON THE BOULEVARD DIDEROT, BACK IN A TIME WHEN THE CITY WAS UNTRAMMELED BY FREE-THINKING ARCHITECTS AND SOCIAL ENGINEERS. NOW EVERY TIME LEWIS RETURNED TO PARIS HE STEELED HIMSELF FOR ANOTHER DESECRATION.



YEAR AFTER YEAR, MORE FINE HOUSES FOUND THEMSELVES RUBBLE. WHOLE STREETS SOMETIMES, GONE TO THE GROUND.

EVEN THE RUE MORGUE.



PERHAPS LEWIS WAS A LITTLE DISAPPOINTED NOT TO HAVE FOUND THE RUE MORGUE.



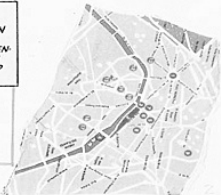
THERE WAS SOME DOUBT AS TO WHETHER THAT INFAMOUS STREET HAD EVER EXISTED IN THE FIRST PLACE, BUT LEWIS SAW LESS AND LESS PURPOSE IN DISTINGUISHING BETWEEN FACT AND FICTION.

FOR THE OLD, THE DISTINCTION WAS ACADEMIC.



AFTER ALL, IT WAS PART OF HIS HERITAGE.

MAYBE THE RUE MORGUE HAD EXISTED, AS DESCRIBED IN EDGAR ALLAN POE'S IMMORTAL STORY; MAYBE IT WAS PURE INVENTION. WHICHEVER, IT WAS NO LONGER TO BE FOUND ON A MAP OF PARIS.



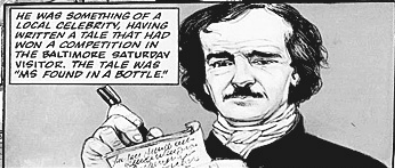


IF THE STORIES LEWIS HAD BEEN TOLD AS A YOUNG BOY WERE CORRECT, THE EVENTS HAD BEEN NARRATED TO POE BY LEWIS' GRANDFATHER. IT WAS HIS MOTHER'S PRIDE THAT HER FATHER HAD MET POE, WHILE TRAVELLING IN AMERICA.

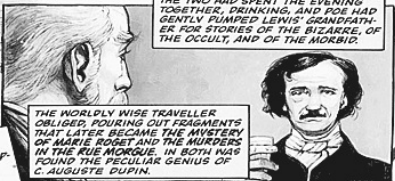
HIS GRANDFATHER HAD BEEN A GLOBE-TROTTER. IN THE WINTER OF 1835 HE VISITED RICHMOND, VIRGINIA.

IT WAS A BITTER WINTER, AND ONE NIGHT THE GRANDFATHER HAD TAKEN REFUGE IN A BAR. THERE, HE HAD MET A MELANCHOLY YOUNG MAN CALLED EDDIE.

HE WAS SOMETHING OF A LOCAL CELEBRITY, HAVING WRITTEN A TALE THAT HAD WON A COMPETITION IN THE BALTIMORE SATURDAY VISITOR. THE TALE WAS "AS FOUND IN A BOTTLE."



THE TWO HAD SPENT THE EVENING TOGETHER, DRINKING, AND POE HAD GENTLY PUMPED LEWIS' GRANDFATHER FOR STORIES OF THE BIZARRE, OF THE OCCULT, AND OF THE MORBID.



THE WORLDLY WISE TRAVELLER OBLIGED, POURING OUT FRAGMENTS THAT LATER BECAME THE MYSTERY OF MARIE ROGET AND THE MURDERS IN THE RUE MORGUE. IN BOTH WAS FOUND THE PECULIAR GENIUS OF C. AUGUSTE DUPIN.

C. AUGUSTE DUPIN. POE'S VISION OF THE PERFECT DETECTIVE: CALM, RATIONAL, AND BRILLIANTLY PERCEPTIVE. DUPIN BECAME A FICTIONAL CELEBRITY, WITHOUT ANYONE IN AMERICA KNOWING THAT DUPIN WAS A REAL PERSON.

AND HIS GREATEST CASE--THE MURDERS IN THE RUE MORGUE--THEY TOO WERE BASED IN FACT.



THE BROTHER OF LEWIS' GRANDFATHER.



TWO WOMEN HAD BEEN BRUTALLY KILLED IN THE RUE MORGUE.

THEY WERE MADAM L'ESPARAYE AND HER DAUGHTER MADEMOISELLE CAMILLE.

BOTH WOMEN OF GOOD REPUTATION, WHO LIVED QUIET LIVES.



THE DAUGHTER'S BODY HAD BEEN THRUST UP THE CHIMNEY; THE BODY OF THE MOTHER WAS DISCOVERED IN THE YARD.

NO APPARENT MOTIVE COULD BE FOUND, AND ALL THE OCCUPANTS CLAIMED TO HAVE HEARD THE MURDERER SPEAKING IN A DIFFERENT LANGUAGE.

THE FRENCHMAN WAS CERTAIN THE VOICE HAD SPOKEN SPANISH, THE ENGLISHMAN HAD HEARD GERMAN, THE DUTCHMAN THOUGHT IT WAS FRENCH. DUPIN NOTED THAT NONE OF THE WITNESSES ACTUALLY SPOKE THE LANGUAGE THEY CLAIMED TO HAVE HEARD.



DUPIN CONCLUDED THAT THE LANGUAGE WAS NO LANGUAGE AT ALL, BUT THE WORDLESS VOICE OF A WILD BEAST.

AN APE IN FACT, A MONSTROUS ORANG-OUTANG FROM THE EAST INDIAN ISLANDS. ITS TAWNY HAIRS HAD BEEN FOUND IN THE GRIP OF THE SLAIN MADAM L'ESPARAYE. ONLY ITS STRENGTH AND AGILITY MADE THE APPALLING FATE OF MADEMOISELLE CAMILLE PLAUSIBLE.



THE BEAST HAD BELONGED TO A MALTESE SAILOR, HAD ESCAPED, AND RUN RIOT IN THE BLOODY APARTMENT ON THE RUE MORGUE.



WHETHER TRUE OR NOT THE TALE HELD A GREAT ROMANTIC APPEAL FOR LEWIS. HE LIKED TO THINK OF HIS GREAT-UNCLE LOGICALLY FACING HIS WAY THROUGH THE MYSTERY UNDISTRESSED BY THE HYSTERIA AND HORROR AROUND HIM. HE THOUGHT OF THAT CALM AS ESSENTIALLY EUROPEAN, BELONGING TO A LOST AGE IN WHICH THE LIGHT OF REASON WAS STILL VALUED, AND THE WORST HORROR THAT COULD BE CONCEIVED OF WAS A BEAST WITH A CUT-THROAT RAZOR.

NOW, AS THE 20TH CENTURY GROUND THROUGH ITS LAST QUARTER, THERE WERE FAR GREATER ATROCITIES, ALL COMMITTED BY HUMAN BEINGS. THE HUMBLE ORANG-OUTANG HAD BEEN FOUND BY ANTHROPOLOGISTS TO BE A SOLITARY HERBIVORE.

THE TRUE MONSTERS WERE FAR LESS APPARENT, AND FAR MORE POWERFUL. THEIR WEAPONS MADE RAZORS LOOK PITIFUL, THEIR CRIMES WERE VAST. IN SOME WAYS LEWIS WAS GLAD TO BE OLD AND LEAVING THE CENTURY TO ITS OWN DEVICES.

YES, THE SNOW FROZE HIS MARROW. YES, TO SEE A YOUNG GIRL WITH THE FACE OF A GODDESS USELESSLY STIRRED HIS DESIRE. YES, HE FELT LIKE AN OBSERVER NOW INSTEAD OF A PARTICIPATOR.

BUT IT HAD NOT ALWAYS BEEN THAT WAY.

IN 1937, IN THE VERY ROOM WHERE HE NOW SAT, THERE HAD BEEN EXPERIENCE ENOUGH.

THEY HAD BEEN CARELESS THEN, IN BOTH SENSES OF THE WORD, LIVING ENDLESS LIVES IN PERFECT LEISURE.



IT WASN'T SO, OF COURSE. THE LIVES HAD NOT BEEN PERFECT, OR ENDLESS. BUT FOR A TIME--A SUMMER, A MONTH, A DAY--IT HAD SEEMED NOTHING IN THE WORLD WOULD CHANGE.

IN HALF A DECADE PARIS WOULD BURN, AND ITS PLAYFUL GUILT, WHICH WAS TRUE INNOCENCE, WOULD BE SOILED PERMANENTLY.

HIS THOUGHTS TURNED TO HIS RECENT NEW YORK EXHIBITION, IN WHICH HIS PAINTINGS HAD BEEN A BRILLIANT CRITICAL SUCCESS. AT THE AGE OF 73 FOX WAS A FETED MAN.

ADMIRERS AND BUYERS HAD SPRUNG UP LIKE MUSHROOMS OVERNIGHT, ALL TOO LATE, OF COURSE.

HE'D PUT DOWN HIS BRUSHES FOR THE LAST TIME FIVE YEARS AGO. NOW HE WAS MERELY A SPECTATOR.

WHEN THE TELEGRAM HAD COME FROM PARIS, BEGGING FOR HIS ASSISTANCE, HE HAD BEEN MORE THAN PLEASED TO SLIP AWAY FROM THE RING OF IMBECILES MOUTHING HIS PRAISE.

NOW HE WAITED IN THE PARKING APARTMENT.

BUT CATHERINE DIDN'T COME.

NIGHT FELL. AT LAST, HE HEARD FOOTSTEPS IN THE HALL, EXCHANGED WHISPERS WITH THE HOUSEKEEPER.

IT WAS CATHERINE. AT LAST, IT WAS CATHERINE.



LEWIS, MY DARLING--



YOU LOOK WELL.

NO, I DON'T. IF I LOOK WELL IT'S AN INSULT TO PHIL- LIFE. HOW CAN I BE WELL WHEN HE'S IN SUCH TROUBLE?

SHE LOOKED OLDER THAN HE'D EXPECTED. HOW LONG WAS IT SINCE HE'D SEEN HER? FOUR YEARS OR FIVE? HER FRAGRANCE WAS THE SAME AS SHE ALWAYS WORE, AND IT REASSURED LEWIS WITH ITS PERMANENCE.



A TINY HESITATION. A FLICKER OF AN EYELID.

HE'S ACCUSED OF...MURDER.



IT'S TRUE, LEWIS. I COULDN'T TELL YOU BY TELEGRAM, YOU UNDERSTAND. I HAD TO SAY IT MYSELF.

MURDER. HE'S ACCUSED OF MURDER.



WHO?

A GIRL, OF COURSE. ONE OF HIS FANCY WOMEN.

HE STILL GETS AROUND DOES HE?

SHE WAS NINETEEN. NATALIE PEREC. LONG RED HAIR. YOU REMEMBER HOW PHILLIPE LOVED REP HEADS?



THERE WAS A PAIN IN HIS TEMPLES, WHICH MIGHT GO IF HE CLOSED HIS EYES. BUT MAYBE SLEEP WAS JUST AN ESCAPE. HERE WAS SOMETHING EVEN HE COULDN'T BE A SPECTATOR TO.

WHERE IS HE?

THEY LOCKED HIM UP. THEY SAY HE'S DANGEROUS. THEY SAY HE COULD KILL AGAIN.

HE NEEDS TO SEE YOU. VERY BADLY.

I AM IN DESPAIR.
SHE'S DEAD. MY
NATALIE IS DEAD.

TELL ME
WHAT
HAPPENED.

I HAVE A
LITTLE APARTMENT
IN MONMARTRE. IN
THE RUE DES
MARTYRS. JUST A
ROOM REALLY, TO
ENTERTAIN FRIENDS.
NATALIE USED TO
SPEND A LOT OF
TIME WITH ME THERE.
SHE WAS SO GOOD
NATURED, SO BEAUTI-
FUL. AND SHE
LOVED ME.

I WENT
OUT SUNDAY
MORNING...
AND WHEN I
CAME BACK...

DONT--

SHE WAS COVERED IN BLOOD. IN
WOUNDS. SKIN TORN OFF...HAIR TORN
OUT. HER TONGUE WAS ON THE PILLOW,
LEWIS. IMAGINE THAT. AND HER EYES,
ALL SWIMMING IN BLOOD. LIKE SHE'D
WEPT BLOOD. SHE WAS THE DEAREST
THING IN ALL CREATION, LEWIS.

NO MORE.
THEY WON'T FIND
YOU GUILTY.

I DON'T CARE,
LEWIS. I DON'T
WANT TO LIVE
NOW. YOU MUST
LOOK AFTER
CATHERINE
NOW.

THEY SAY TERRIBLE
THINGS ABOUT ME NOW.
IN THE NEWSPAPERS.
THAT'S WHAT THEY THINK,
I'M CERTAIN.

YOU MUST LOOK
AFTER CATHERINE. SHE'S
GOT MONEY, BUT NO
FRIENDS. YOU HAVE TO
STAY WITH HER.

I SHALL.

I KNOW. I KNOW.
THAT'S WHY I FEEL HAPPY,
REALLY, TO JUST...

NO, PHILLIPE.

JUST DIE.
THERE'S NOTHING LEFT FOR
US, LEWIS. THE WORLD'S
TOO HARD.



THE OFFICER IN CHARGE OF THE INVESTIGATION WAS LESS THAN HELPFUL. LEWIS' CONTEMPT FOR THE SHODDILY DRESSED WEASEL MADE THE INTERVIEW CRACKLE WITH SUPPRESSED ANGER.

YOUR FRIEND IS A MURDERER, MONSIEUR FOX. IT IS AS SIMPLE AS THAT. THE EVIDENCE IS OVERWHELMING.

I CAN'T BELIEVE THAT.

BELIEVE WHAT YOU LIKE. HE WILL BE PUNISHED TO THE FULL EXTENT OF THE LAW.

WHAT EVIDENCE DO YOU HAVE AGAINST HIM?

NO OTHER PERSON WAS SEEN IN THE HOUSE AND ACCESS IS ONLY POSSIBLE BY THE STAIRS--

AND THE BODY?

HORRIBLE. SKIN AND MUSCLE STRIPPED FROM THE BONE. ALL THE SPINE EXPOSED. BLOOD. MUCH BLOOD.

AN OLD MAN WOULD NOT BE CAPABLE--

IN OTHER RESPECTS HE SEEMS TO HAVE BEEN QUITE CAPABLE, OUI? THE LOVER, VES?

I UNDERSTAND YOUR CONFUSION, OUI? BUT YOU ARE WASTING YOUR TIME. A CRIME IS A CRIME. IT IS REAL, IT IS THE TRUTH.

TRUTH? YOU WOULDN'T KNOW THE TRUTH IF YOU TRIPPED OVER IT.

IT WAS PRECIOUS LITTLE SATISFACTION, BUT IT MADE LEWIS FEEL BETTER FOR AT LEAST FIVE MINUTES.

THE HOUSE ON THE RUE DES MARTYRS WAS NOT IN GOOD CONDITION. DOORS OPENED AS HE PASSED, BUT NOBODY TRIED TO STOP HIM.

THE ROOM WHERE THE ATROCITY HAD HAPPENED WAS LOCKED.

CATHERINE WAS BACK AT THE QUAI DE BOURBON.

WHAT'S WRONG?

I WENT TO PHILLIPPE'S APARTMENT.

SO DID I. IT WAS LOCKED.

FRUSTRATED, HE MADE HIS WAY BACK DOWN THE STAIRS AND INTO THE BITTER AIR.

I HAVE THE KEY. PHILLIPPE'S SPARE KEY. I JUST WANTED TO PICK UP A FEW CLOTHES FOR HIM.

"SOMEBODY ELSE WAS THERE"

"WHO?"

"I COULDN'T SEE. I DON'T KNOW EXACTLY... HE HAD A RAZOR, LEWIS. AN OPEN RAZOR, LIKE A BARBER."

SOMETHING JANGLED IN THE BACK OF LEWIS FOX'S MIND. AN OPEN RAZOR; A MAN DRESSED SO WELL HE COULDN'T BE RECOGNIZED.

DID HE HURT YOU?

I SCREAMED AND HE RAN AWAY...

MAYBE... A FRIEND OF THE GIRL... A BROTHER...

PERHAPS, BUT...
THERE WAS SOMETHING
ODD ABOUT HIM. HE
SMELLED OF PERFUME,
STANK OF IT, AND HE
WALKED WITH SUCH
MINCING LITTLE STEPS,
EVEN THOUGH HE
WAS HUGE.

TOMORROW
I'LL SPEAK TO
THE WEASEL.

INSPECTOR
MARAIS, HAVE
HIM SEARCH
THE PLACE.

WEASEL?

DID YOU
SEE PHILLIPE? IS
HE WELL?

HE WANTS TO DIE,
CATHERINE. HAS GIVEN
UP FIGHTING ALREADY,
BEFORE HE GOES
TO TRIAL.

BUT HE
DIDN'T DO
ANYTHING.

WE CAN'T
PROVE THAT.

YOU'RE ALWAYS
BOASTING ABOUT YOUR BLESSED DUPIN.
YOU PROVE IT...

WHERE DO
I START?

SPEAK TO SOME
OF HIS FRIENDS, LEWIS.
PLEASE. MAYBE THE
WOMAN HAD ENEMIES.

JACQUES SOLAL STARED AT LEWIS THROUGH
HIS ROUND-BELLIED SPECTACLES.

SHE HADN'T
GOT ANY ENEMIES,
NOT HER. OH,
MAYBE A FEW
WOMEN JEALOUS OF
HER BEAUTY...

SOLAL WAS AS UNINFORMATIVE AS HE WAS
DRUNK, BUT, UNLIKELY AS IT SEEMED,
CATHERINE HAD DESCRIBED THE RUNT
ACROSS THE TABLE AS PHILLIPE'S CLOS-
EST FRIEND.

DO YOU THINK
PHILLIPE
MURDERED HER?

WHO KNOWS? AH,
HE WAS MY FRIEND.
IF I KNEW WHO
HAD KILLED HER, I
WOULD SAY SO.

HE WAS A GENTLEMAN.

AND THE GIRL?

SHE WAS BEAUTIFUL, AND HE WAS IN LOVE WITH HER. SHE HAD OTHER ADMIRERS, OF COURSE. A WOMAN LIKE HER--

JEALOUS ADMIRERS?

WHO KNOWS?

AGAIN: WHO KNOWS? FOR THE FIRST TIME IN TEN YEARS PERHAPS A GOAL APPEARED IN LEWIS' LIFE-- AN AMBITION TO SHOOT THE INDIFFERENT "WHO KNOWS?" OUT OF THE AIR... TO DISCOVER WHAT HAD HAPPENED IN THAT ROOM ON THE RUE DES MARTYRS.

DO YOU REMEMBER IF THERE WERE ANY PARTICULAR MEN WHO FANCIED HER?

OH, YES. THERE WAS ONE. I NEVER KNEW HIS NAME. A BIG MAN. I SAW HIM OUTSIDE THE HOUSE THREE OR FOUR TIMES. THOUGH TO SMELL HIM YOU'D HAVE THOUGHT--

HE SMELLED? OF WHAT?

PERFUME, LEWIS. PERFUME.

SOMEWHERE IN PARIS THERE WAS A MAN WHO HAD KNOWN THE GIRL. JEALOUS RAGE HAD OVERCOME HIM. IT WAS AS CLEAR AS THAT.

PHILLIPE-- HE LIKED THE PICTURES.

HE CAME HERE, SOMETIMES, TO SEE THEM.

THE CUTTINGS WERE OLD, STAINED AND FADING. PURELY LOCAL INTEREST. ACCOUNTS OF A FIRE-BALL SEEN IN A NEARBY STREET. ANOTHER ABOUT A BOY OF TWO BURNED TO DEATH IN HIS COT.

SOME FAR OLDER THAN OTHERS, ATROCITIES, BIZARRE MURDERS, RITUAL RAPES.



AND ALMOST BURIED WAS A SEPIA PHOTOGRAPH SO ABSURD IT COULD HAVE COME FROM THE HAND OF MAX ERNST. A HALF RING OF GENTLEMEN WERE GROUPED AROUND THE VAST BLEEDING BULK OF AN APE. THE FACES IN THE PICTURE BORE EXPRESSIONS OF MUTE PRIDE, OF ABSOLUTE AUTHORITY OVER THE DEAD BEAST.

WHAT IS THAT?

WHO KNOWS? WHO KNOWS?



IT WAS NOT THE APE OF POE'S STORY, THAT WAS CERTAIN. THAT TALE HAD BEEN TOLD IN 1835, AND THE PHOTOGRAPH WAS FAR MORE RECENT. BESIDES, THE APE IN THE PICTURE WAS A GORILLA. CLEARLY A GORILLA.



HAD HISTORY REPEATED ITSELF? HAD ANOTHER APE, A DIFFERENT SPECIES, BEEN LOOSED ON THE STREETS OF PARIS AT THE TURN OF THE CENTURY?

AND IF SO, IF THE STORY OF THE APE COULD REPEAT ITSELF ONCE... WHY NOT TWICE?



AS LEWIS WALKED THE IMAGINED EVENTS BECAME MORE ATTRACTIVE: WAS IT POSSIBLE THAT HE, THE NEPHEW OF DUPIN, MIGHT BECOME INVOLVED IN ANOTHER PURSUIT, NOT ENTIRELY DISSIMILAR FROM THE FIRST?

THE KEY TO PHILLIPS' ROOM WAS ICY IN LEWIS' HAND.



IT WAS SATURDAY NIGHT, AND THERE WAS A LOT OF NOISE IN A NUMBER OF THE ROOMS.

THE KEY TURNED EASILY.

LEWIS REACHED FOR THE LIGHT SWITCH AND SNAPPED IT ON. NOTHING HAPPENED. THE BULB WAS SHATTERED.



HE HALF-THOUGHT ABOUT RETREATING.



SURELY IT WAS A MATTER OF A FEW MINUTES WORK TO FIND A CHANGE OF CLOTHES FOR PHILLIPS. OTHERWISE HE WOULD HAVE TO RETURN THE NEXT DAY. BETTER TO DO IT NOW AND SAVE HIS BONES.



THE CHILLY WEATHER HAD THICKENED THE MUCUS IN HIS SINUSES. FOR THE FIRST TIME THE SMELL OF THE ROOM CAME TO HIM.

PERFUME. THE LINGERING SCENT OF PERFUME.



CURIOUSLY, LEWIS WASN'T FRIGHTENED.

WHAT ARE YOU DOING?

ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?

WHO ARE YOU?

WAIT!

PLEASE WAIT, I WANT TO TALK TO YOU.

LEWIS' JOINTS WERE STIFF WITH AGE AND THE COLD, AND IT WAS LATE. NO TIME TO BE RUNNING AFTER A MUCH YOUNGER MAN.

BY THE TIME LEWIS MADE IT OUTSIDE, THE SMELL OF THE PERFUME WAS ALREADY SNATCHED AWAY BY THE NORTHEAST WIND.

THE NEXT DAY PARIS WOKE TO A BLIZZARD. FEW PEOPLE HAD EITHER THE NERVE OR MOTIVE TO STEP OUTSIDE INTO THE HOWLING GALE.

CATHERINE WANTED TO GO TO THE PRISON, BUT LEWIS INSISTED THAT HE GO ALONE. IT WAS NOT SIMPLY THE COLD WEATHER THAT MADE HIM CAUTIOUS ON HER BEHALF; HE HAD DIFFICULT WORDS TO SAY TO PHILLIPS, DELICATE QUESTIONS TO ASK HIM. THE ONLY WAY TO SAVE PHILLIPS' LIFE, IT SEEMED, WAS TO TRACE THE MAN. AND IF THAT MEANT DELVING INTO PHILLIPS' SEXUAL ARRANGEMENTS, THEN SO BE IT. BUT IT WASN'T A CONVERSATION HE, OR PHILLIPS, WOULD HAVE WANTED TO CONDUCT IN CATHERINE'S PRESENCE.



I WENT TO THE HOUSE TO FETCH THESE FOR YOU.

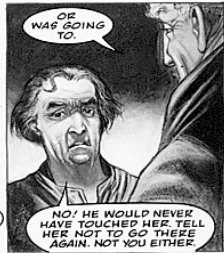


NO.

PHILLIPS--

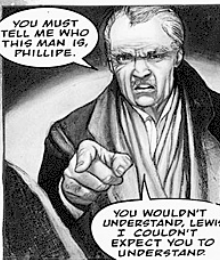
NO!

THE SAME MAN ATTACKED CATHERINE. WITH A RAZOR.



OR WAS GOING TO.

NO! HE WOULD NEVER HAVE TOUCHED HER. TELL HER NOT TO GO THERE AGAIN. NOT YOU EITHER.



YOU MUST TELL ME WHO THIS MAN IS, PHILLIPS.

YOU WOULDN'T UNDERSTAND, LEWIS. I COULDN'T EXPECT YOU TO UNDERSTAND.



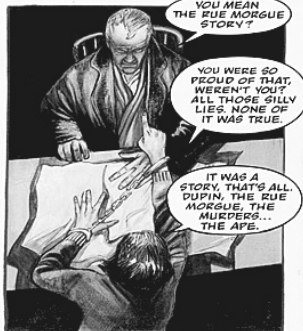
JUST LET ME DIE... I WANT TO FORGET, WHY DO YOU TRY TO MAKE ME REMEMBER? I WANT TO--



LEWIS COULD MAKE NO SENSE OF THE TRANSFORMATION.



WITH YOUR STORIES. WITH YOUR DAMN DUPIN. IT WAS ALL A LIE--ALL STUPID LIES. WOMEN, MURDER--





NATALIE
WAS A
WHORE!



WHORE!
WHORE!
WHORE!



HE WAS
HERE.

HE DIDN'T NEED TO ASK WHO
THE STRANGER. THE TEARFUL,
RAZOR-WIELDING STRANGER.



WHAT
DID HE
WANT
?

HE KEPT SAYING
'PHILLIPE' TO ME.
ALMOST SAYING
IT...GRUNTING IT.
AND WHEN I
DIDN'T ANSWER HE
JUST DESTROYED
THE FURNITURE,
THE VASES.

CATHERINE, PHILLIPE, THE STRANGER. EVERYONE
IN HIS NARROW WORLD, IT SEEMED WAS HURT AND
BROKEN. EVERYONE WAS SUFFERING; AND YET
THE SOURCE, THE HEART OF THE SUFFERING,
WAS NOWHERE TO BE FOUND.



ONLY PHILLIPE HAD POINTED AN ACCUSING
FINGER. AT LEWIS HIMSELF. HE LOOKED
ACROSS THE ICE-THICKENED WATERS OF
THE SEINE; THEN A MOVEMENT CAUGHT
HIS EYE. HIS STOMACH TURNED.

THE LOOK ON THE STRANGER'S
FACE WAS OF UTTER DESPAIR,
SO PITIFUL AS TO BE
ALMOST TRAGIC.



OR RATHER, A PERFORMANCE OF
TRAGEDY: AN ACTOR'S PAIN.

EVEN AS LEWIS STARED DOWN AT
HIM, THE STRANGER RAISED HIS ARMS
TO THE WINDOW IN A GESTURE THAT
SEEMED TO BEG EITHER FORGIVENESS
OR UNDERSTANDING, OR BOTH.



IT WAS TOO MUCH;
ALL TOO MUCH.

IT WASN'T A MAN'S WALK,
THAT ROLL, THAT SWAGGER.



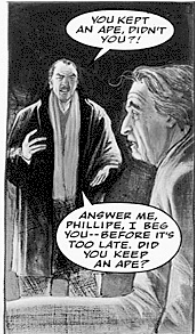
IT WAS THE GAIT OF AN UPRIGHT BEAST
WHO'D BEEN TAUGHT TO WALK, AND
NOW, WITHOUT ITS MASTER, WAS
LOSING THE TRICK OF IT.



IT WAS AN APE.

OH GOD, OH GOD,
IT WAS AN APE.





"IT BROKE INTO THE APARTMENT, WHILE CATHERINE WAS THERE. IT'S DANGEROUS NOW THAT IT HAS NO MASTER. DON'T YOU UNDERSTAND? THANK GOD, CATHERINE WAS UNHARMED."

"IT'S TRAINED--IT WOULDN'T HARM HER."

"AND THE GIRL?"

PERHAPS. I
DON'T WANT
TO THINK
ABOUT IT.



WHY HAVEN'T
YOU TOLD THEM...
HAD THE THING
DESTROYED?

I DON'T KNOW
IF IT'S TRUE. IT'S
PROBABLY ALL A
FICTION, JUST
ANOTHER STORY.



WHERE IS
THE APE?

IT WAS A TIRED DE-
BATE: REALITY AND
ILLUSION. EITHER A
THING WAS, OR WAS
NOT. LIFE WAS
NOT A DREAM.

YOU KNOW
WHAT I MEAN,
LEWIS. IT COULD
BE A STORY. EXCEPT
THAT MAYBE I MADE
IT TRUE FOR A
WHILE...DID YOU EVER
THINK OF THAT?
MAYBE I MADE
IT TRUE.



HERE--WHERE
YOU CAN NEVER
FIND HIM.

YOU DON'T
KNOW WHAT
YOU DID
YOU'LL NEVER
KNOW.

HE QUIETLY
SLASHED AND
FOUNTAINED
AWAY TO
DEATH.

ALL HE COULD THINK
OF NOW WAS THAT
PHILLIPE HAD IT
EASY. HE'D TAKEN
REFUGE IN PRE-
TENDED GUILT AND
LOCKED HIMSELF
AWAY WHERE MEM-
ORY, AND REVENGE,
AND THE TRUTH
COULD NEVER
TOUCH HIM AGAIN.



HE HATED PHILLIPE
AT THAT MOMENT
FOR THE COWARD
HE'D ALWAYS
KNOWN HIM TO BE.
NO LIFE COULD BE
LIVED THE WAY HE'D
LIVED IT WITHOUT
A RECKONING
COMING SOONER OR
LATER. AND
HERE IT WAS.



THAT NIGHT PHILLIPE WOKE. IN THE UTTER DARK
HE CHEWED HIS WRIST UNTIL A PULSE OF BLOOD
BUBBLED INTO HIS MOUTH.

THE SUICIDE WAS REPORTED IN A SMALL ARTICLE ON THE SECOND PAGE OF LE MONDE. THE BIG NEWS OF THE FOLLOWING DAY, HOWEVER, WAS THE SENSATIONAL MURDER OF A RED-HEADED PROSTITUTE IN A LITTLE HOUSE OFF THE RUE DE ROCHECHOUART. MONIQUE ZEVACO HAD BEEN FOUND AT THREE O'CLOCK IN THE MORNING BY HER FLAT-MATE, HER BODY IN A STATE SO HORRIBLE AS TO "DEFY DESCRIPTION."

DESPITE THE ALLEGED IMPOSSIBILITY OF THE TASK, THE MEDIA SET ABOUT DESCRIBING THE INDESCRIBABLE WITH A MORBID WILL. EVERY LAST SCRATCH, TEAR AND GOUGING ON MONIQUE'S PARTIALLY NUDE BODY WAS CHRONICLED IN DETAIL. AS INDEED WAS THE APPEARANCE OF HER WELL-DRESSED, OVER-PERFUMED MURDERER, WHO HAD APPARENTLY WATCHED HER AT HER TOILET THROUGH A SMALL BACK WINDOW, THEN BROKEN IN AND ATTACKED MADEMOISELLE ZEVACO IN HER BATHROOM.

ONLY ONE COMMENTATOR MADE ANY CONNECTION BETWEEN THE MURDER AT THE RUE DES MARTYRS AND THE SLAUGHTER OF ZEVACO, AND HE FAILED TO PICK UP ON THE CURIOUS COINCIDENCE THAT THE ACCUSED PHILLIPE LABORTEAUX HAD THAT SAME NIGHT TAKEN HIS OWN LIFE.



...au, telle ru
...s fruits, ...
...constituent sa grammaire
...lière, mais il est tout aussi clair
...que l'essentiel est ailleurs, dans
...la construction savamment de-
...crite de la composition,
...l'équilibre établi entre les plans
...qui l'animent, richement
...des maisons, perspectives des
...subtile que jouent les objets, les
...tacles et les fonds de ses natures
...mortes.
...Ce sont là jeux subtils, si riches
...de découvertes renouvelées que
...l'artiste n'a jamais éprouvé le
...besoin de changer radicalement
...le manière pour échapper à
...quelque grave crise, comme en
...connaissent bien des créateurs:
...non, ce qui lui im-
...davantage de pour
...qu'il sait être en-
...delà cette

...ne peut
...ce n'est même pas celui d'expliquer ce qui se
...se expliquer, mais de proposer un certain nombre
...responsabilités qui s'établissent entre un inconnu
...chacun à cette élaboration singulière
...Vrai. L'un sans les deux privilèges du peintre
...choréographe

...sivement la
...s, pour se situer
...ures de l'abstrait.
...Restera-t-il à dire la su-
...monie des plus bel
...qui coulerait en ne
...de gravité et de
...calme, comme les
...les plus déchirantes
...Tel est le sens d
...menée sans souf-
...des modes; la ré
...Chromocrom per-
...à novembre, c
...contre dans son
...on saura gré à
...Louis Menier, à
...Menier d'en av
...nécessité.

THE FUNERAL TOOK PLACE IN A STORM.

EVERY ONE IN PHILLIPE'S CIRCLE HAD DESERTED HIM, UNWILLING TO ATTEND THE FUNERAL OF A SUICIDE AND OF A SUSPECTED MURDERER. HIS WIT HIS GOOD LOOKS, HIS INFINITE CAPACITY FOR CHARM, WENT FOR NOTHING IN THE END.

HE WAS NOT, AS IT TURNED OUT, ENTIRELY UNMOURNED BY STRANGERS.



OVER THERE, UNDER THE TREE.

I'M GOING AFTER HIM.

IT WAS AS THOUGH THE CREATURE WAS SOME MORBID ANGEL, COME TO HOVER A WHILE AND ENJOY THE GRIEF. IT WAS GROTESQUE, AND EERIE, THAT THIS THING SHOULD COME TO SEE PHIL: LIFE CONSIDERED TO THE FROZEN EARTH. WHAT DID IT FEEL? ANGUISH? GUILT?



IN A SHORT WHILE BOTH THE STRANGER AND HIS PURSUER WERE ERASED BY THE SNOW.



BACK AT THE QUAI DE
BOURBON CATHERINE
AND LEWIS SAID NOTHING
OF THE INCIDENT.
A KIND OF BARRIER
HAD APPEARED BETWEEN
THEM, FORBIDDING
CONTACT ON ANY
LEVEL BUT THE
MOST TRIVIAL.

SILENTLY THEY MOURNED THE LOSS.
LEWIS UNDERSTOOD NOW PHILLIPE'S
RELUCTANCE TO LIVE WHEN THERE
WAS SUCH LOSS IN THE WORLD.

RRRIINGGG

PHILLIPE WAS DEAD.
THE PAST, THEIR PAST
TOGETHER, WAS DEAD.
THIS FINAL CHAPTER
IN THEIR JOINT LIVES
SOURD UTTERLY
EVERYTHING THAT
HAD PRECEDED IT,
SO THAT NO SHARED
MEMORY COULD BE
ENJOYED WITHOUT
THE PLEASURE
BEING SPOILED.

JACQUES SOLAL
RANG, BREATHLESS,
BUT ELATED.

DON'T GO IN,
JACQUES. WAIT FOR
ME. DON'T--

I'M AT GARE
DU NORD, AND I'VE
FOUND OUT WHERE
OUR FRIEND
LIVES.

IT'S IN THE
BASEMENT OF
NUMBER SIXTEEN, RUE
DES FLEURS.

CLICK

WHO WAS
THAT?

NOBODY AT ALL.
DON'T WORRY. I
WON'T BE LONG.

HE LEFT HER GAZING
OVER THE NIGHT-
CLAD SEINE, WATCHING
THE ICE-FLOES DANCE
TOGETHER ON THE
BLACK WATER.



WHEN HE ARRIVED, SOLAL WAS NOT TO BE SEEN, BUT FRESH FOOTPRINTS IN THE POWDERY SNOW LED TO THE FRONT DOOR AND THEN, FOILED, WENT AROUND BACK OF THE HOUSE.

AS HE STEPPED INTO THE YARD BEHIND THE HOUSE HE REALIZED HE HAD COME WITHOUT A WEAPON.

THEN IT WAS GONE.

LEWIS THOUGHT OF THE RAZOR. WAS THAT WHY IT HAD BEEN IN PHIL-
LIFE'S ROOM?

LEWIS HAD THE IMPRES-
SION THAT IT WAS
PREPARING ITSELF FOR
THE OUTSIDE WORLD,
AND THE SIGHT WAS
TOUCHING AS MUCH AS
INTIMIDATING.

IT'S DAYS OF INNO-
CENCE HAD GONE:
IT COULD NEVER BE
AN UNAMBITIOUS
BEAST AGAIN.
TRAPPED IN ITS
NEW PERSONA, IT
HAD NO CHOICE
BUT TO CONTINUE
IN THE LIFE ITS
MASTER HAD
AWOKEN ITS
TASTE FOR.

THE DOOR WAS NOT
LOCKED. AS LEWIS
STEPPED INSIDE THE
STENCH STRUCK HIM...
THE SICKLY SWEET
SMELL OF ROTTEN
FRUIT MINGLED
WITH THE CLOVING
COLOGNE: ZOO
AND BOUDOIR.

BUT THE BEAST
WAS ABOUT
OTHER BUSINESS.



JACQUES SOLAL WAS NOT THERE.



SOLAL?



SOLAL!?

HE HADN'T LOVED THIS MAN, BUT NOW ALL HE WANTED WAS TO TAKE HIM AWAY, OUT OF THE APE'S CASE, AND FIND HIM A HUMAN GRAVE.

LEWIS COULD FEEL A JITTERING NERVOUSNESS IN HIS LIMBS. HIS BODY WAS CLOSE TO BETRAYING HIM, HE KNEW, CLOSE TO FAILING.

MAYBE HE SHOULD GO NOW, AND FIND A PHONE, BUT THAT WOULD MEAN LEAVING JACQUES IN THE LAIR, FOR THE BEAST TO ASSAULT AGAIN, AND HE HAD BECOME STRANGELY PROTECTIVE OF THE CORPSE.



...BUT JACQUES WAS ALREADY GONE. THESE SHUDDERS AND JERKS WERE NOT SIGNS OF THOUGHT, JUST THE PIN OF PASSING.



NOT HERE. IN GOD'S NAME, NOT HERE.



UNABLE TO LEAVE
JACQUES YET UNABLE
TO MOVE HIM FAR, HE
DID NOTHING AT ALL.

WAITING, IN A DREAMY
HALF-LIFE, FOR THE
END OF THE WORLD.



THEN, IT CAME
HOME NOISILY
LIKE A
DRUNKEN MAN.



THERE WAS A VOICE IN THE
ROOM, A WOMAN'S VOICE.
THROUGH THE CRACK LEWIS
COULD SEE THE BEAST,
AND A RED-HAIR YOUNG
WOMAN WITH HIM.



YOU'VE
GOT MORE! OH YOU
SWEETIE!

WHERE DID
YOU GET ALL
THIS? OKAY, IF
YOU DON'T WANT
TO TELL ME, IT'S
FINE BY ME.



IT'S
SO...HOT...IN
HERE.

SHALL
I TAKE
EVERYTHING
OFF? YOU DON'T
SAY MUCH,
DO YOU?



WHAT EXPRESSION DID
THAT SHAVED FACE WEAR?
WAS THERE LUST IN ITS
EYES, OR DOUBT?

WAS THIS PHILLIPS'S DOING
TOO, OR HAD THE APE
STOLEN THE STUFF FOR
HIS OWN PURPOSES? DID
HE REGULARLY SEDUCE
RED-HEADED PROSTITUTES
WITH DRUGS?

LEWIS BEGAN TO
FEEL DIZZY AGAIN.
HIS LOWER LIMBS
WERE NOW COM-
PLETELY NUMB.
YET HE DIDN'T
DARE MOVE.





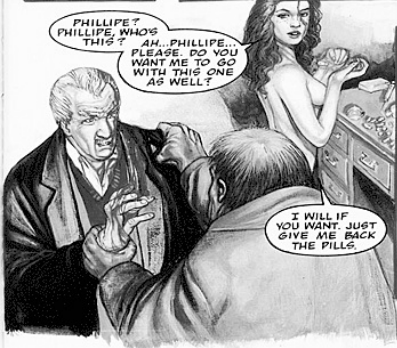
THE APE WAS CAPABLE OF ANYTHING. LEWIS KNEW THAT. IF HE WAS DISCOVERED, WHAT MIGHT IT CHOOSE TO DO TO HIM AND THE GIRL?

THE AGONY WAS BECOMING UNBEARABLE. HE BEGAN TO THINK HE WOULD DIE IN THIS PATHETIC HIDING PLACE, WHILE THE APE MADE LOVE.



IT WAS TOO MUCH. WAS THIS DEATH? THE LIGHTS IN THE HEAD, THE WHINE IN HIS EARS? IT SEEMED TO GO ON FOREVER, INVADING HIS HEAD, SIGHS, LAUGHTER, LITTLE SHRIEKS.

AT LAST, DARKNESS.



PHILLIP? PHILLIP, WHO'S THIS?

PHILLIP... PLEASE. DO YOU WANT ME TO GO WITH THIS ONE AS WELL?

I WILL IF YOU WANT. JUST GIVE ME BACK THE PILLS.



LEWIS

THE OLD MAN SHOULD BE READY FOR ANYTHING. EVEN TO BE GREETED AS A FRIEND OF A FRIEND BY THE BEAST THAT LOOMED IN FRONT OF HIM.



IT HAD COME TO THIS--OFFERED A HUMAN WOMAN BY THIS NAKED APE. IT WAS THE LAST, GOD HELP HIM, THE VERY LAST CHAPTER IN THE FICTION HIS GREAT-UNCLE HAD BEGUN. FROM LOVE TO MURDER BACK TO LOVE AGAIN.

LEWIS.

THE LOVE OF AN APE FOR A MAN. HE HAD CAUSED IT, WITH HIS DREAMS OF FICTIONAL HEROES, STEEPED IN ABSOLUTE REASON. HE HAD COAXED PHILLIPE INTO MAKING REAL THE STORIES OF A LOST YOUTH.



HE WAS TO BLAME.

AREN'T YOU STAYING?

THIS THING...



HE'S NOT CALLED PHILLIPE. HE'S NOT EVEN HUMAN.

PLEASE YOURSELF.

LEWIS.

NOT THIS POOR STRUTTING APE, LOST BETWEEN THE JUNGLE AND THE STOCK EXCHANGE; NOT PHILLIPE, WANTING TO BE YOUNG FOREVER; CERTAINLY NOT COLD CATHERINE, WHO AFTER TONIGHT WOULD BE COMPLETELY ALONE. IT WAS HIM. LEWIS.



THIS TIME, INSTEAD OF COMING OUT AS A SORT OF GRUNT-WORD, IT WAS PHILLIPE'S VOICE, PERFECTLY.

NOT PLEADING, NOT DEMANDING, SIMPLY NAMING, FOR THE PLEASURE OF NAMING, AN EQUAL.



IT WAS A CLEAR-
HEAVEN DAY; THE
LAST OF THE WINTER'S
SNOW HAD FALLEN,
AND THE THAW WOULD
BEGIN BY NOON.

WHO WAS
THAT?

WHO
KNOWS.



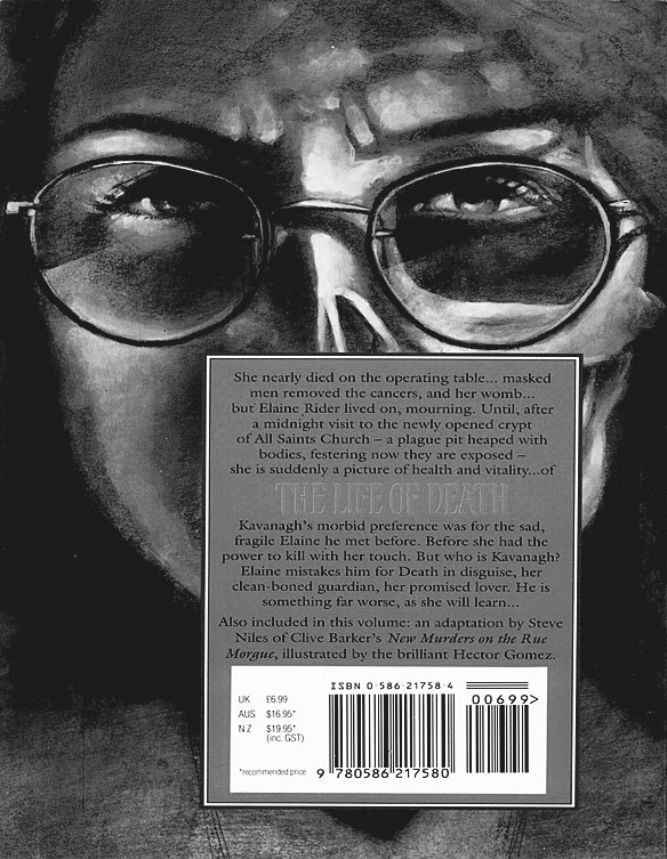
BIRDS, EXULTING IN THE SUDDEN SUN,
SWOOPED OVER THE SACRÉ COEUR. PARIS
BEGAN TO UNPRESS FOR SPRING, ITS VIRGIN
WHITE TOO SPOILED TO BE WORN FOR LONG.

IN MID-MORNING, A YOUNG WOMAN WITH
RED HAIR, HER ARM LINKED IN THAT OF A
LARGE UGLY MAN, TOOK A LEISURELY STROLL
TO THE STEPS OF THE SACRÉ COEUR.

THE SUN BLESSED
THEM. BELLS RANG.

IT WAS A
NEW DAY.

F&N



She nearly died on the operating table... masked men removed the cancers, and her womb... but Elaine Rider lived on, mourning. Until, after a midnight visit to the newly opened crypt of All Saints Church – a plague pit heaped with bodies, festering now they are exposed – she is suddenly a picture of health and vitality...of

THE LIFE OF DEATH

Kavanagh's morbid preference was for the sad, fragile Elaine he met before. Before she had the power to kill with her touch. But who is Kavanagh?

Elaine mistakes him for Death in disguise, her clean-boned guardian, her promised lover. He is something far worse, as she will learn...

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